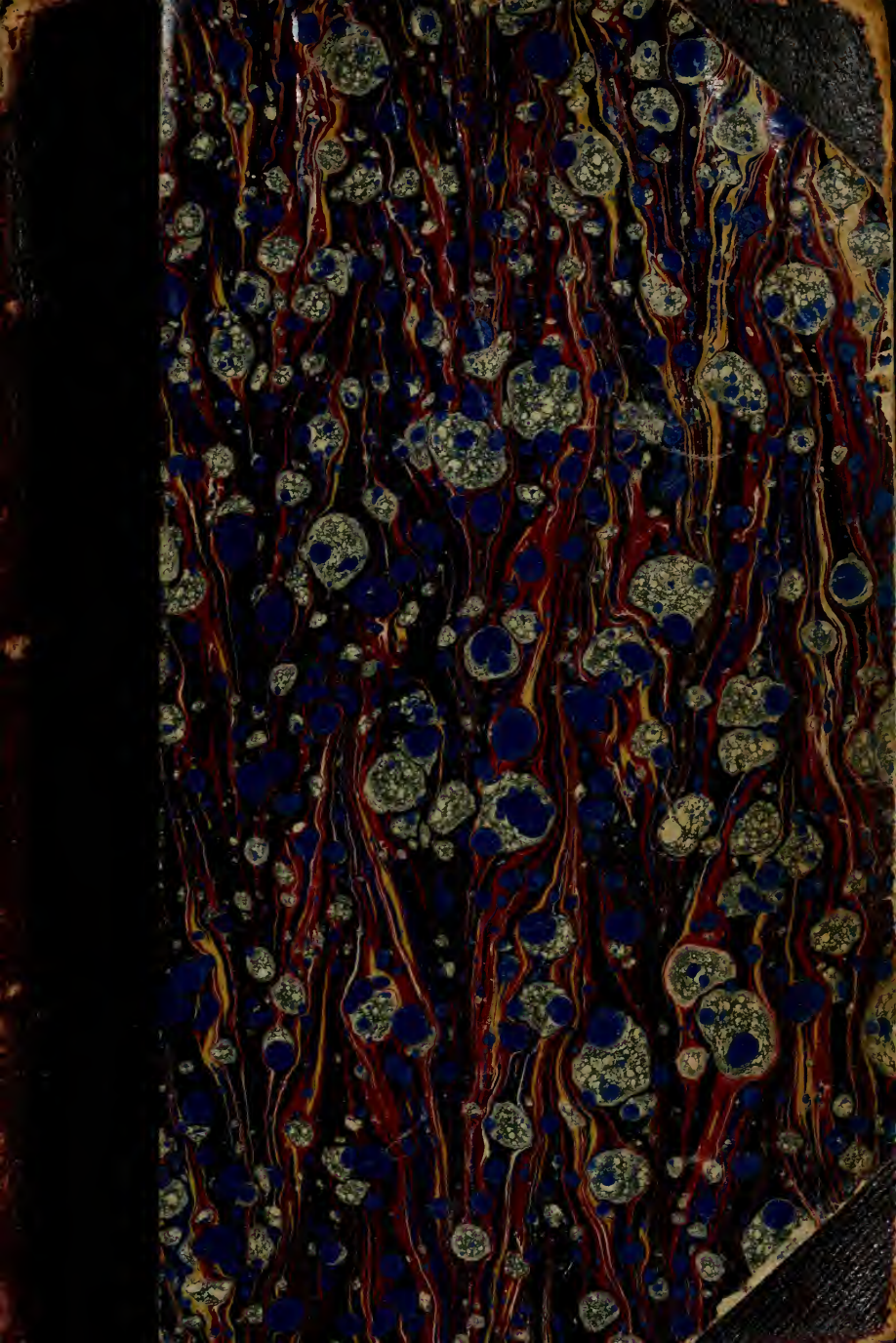

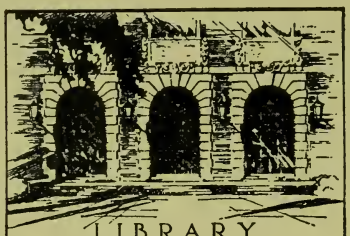

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THE MASTER OF ABERFELDIE.

VOL. III.

THE MASTER OF ABERFELDIE

BY

JAMES GRANT

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE CAMERONIANS,"
"THE SCOTTISH CAVALIER,"

ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MASTER OF ABERFELDIE.

CHAPTER I.

SUSPICION.

Many a wife, mother, and maid watched the progress of our troops from point to point in Egypt, from the bombardment of Alexandria, with the subsequent landing, up to the last telegram which announced that the army had begun its auspicious night march from Kassassin towards Tel-el-Kebir, but none could do so with more anxiety than had Olive Raymond and Eveline.

To them and to how many loving hearts at home were the next telegrams fraught with terror and anxiety!

Olive was free to rush to the newspapers as soon as they arrived. But not so Eveline, for so suspicious of her secret interest in one who was far away had Sir Paget become, that he absolutely kept them out of her sight as much as possible; and she had a terror in her heart that Evan Cameron might be killed in action, and, for a time, all unknown to her.

Great was her craving for intelligence. She could not, like a man, go to clubs or newspaper offices, when the latest telegrams—often false ones—were posted up; and often nightly she went to bed with the agonising yet unasked question on her lips, 'Oh, what has happened to-day in Egypt?—what is happening *now?*' and she had to scan the morning papers, if at all,

surreptitiously, eagerly, and feverishly, for what she did *not* want to see.

How would she have suffered the old Peninsula war time, when news and battle lists appeared in the weekly and bi-weekly journals more than a month, yea, sometimes two months, after victories were won (we had no defeats in those long-service days), and after the grass was green above the graves of our gallant dead—the men that knew how to die, but never turn their heel before a foe—when our regiments fought for the historic glory of their *number*, as steadily as for king and country!

Sir Paget knew the source of his young wife's anxiety, and watched her grimly.

'How dull my life is with *him*, kind though he tries to be,' thought the girl; 'we have not a thought, feeling, or inspiration in common. When with Evan, it seemed all inspiration, and thoughts came

and went so fast. He always brought bright ones to me.'

He was her first and only love—the love that leads a girl to see only ideal perfection in the object so beloved. Their passion had been like the dream of a mid-summer night, and now they were to meet never more—never more!

She recalled the words of the song he was wont to sing to the air of 'Rousseau's Dream'—

'See the moon o'er cloudless Jura
Shining in the loch below;
See the distant mountain towering
Like a pyramid of snow.

'Scenes of grandeur, scenes of childhood,
Scenes so dear to love and me!
When we roam by bower or wild wood,
All is lovelier when with *thee!*'

And, as she touched the piano, his voice seemed to come to her ear again.

'Eveline!' she would murmur, dreamily,

'he called me Eveline—his own—yes, I can hear his voice plainly now—plainly as I heard it at Dundargue, and on that last evening at Maviswood.'

Then her eye would fall on her wedding-ring, and a kind of shiver passed over her.

She strove to read, but that was almost impossible; her mind wandered from the story, or sometimes certain passages struck her painfully. In a novel ('Out of Court') one ran thus:—'She married him; she ceased to love him, and she died, which, on the whole, was a better fortune than generally befalls the women who make this *irretrievable* stumble on the threshold of life.'

'Oh! would I but die too; but I am too young, and too strong!' she thought, bitterly. 'Our hearts choose for us, in spite of us, and I chose Evan.'

Bound though she was to a husband beyond her years, uncongenial, and, in some points, unappreciative, she could respect him, but she could never love him; that was impossible. Her love was far away, where the shadows of the Pyramids fell on the sands of Ghizeh, and the pipes of the Black Watch sent up their wild war-notes in the desert of Goshen.

She had still the companionship of Olive, who, with her aunt, Lady Aberfeldie, was lingering at Southsea.

'Take care, Eveline,' said the former, warningly, 'lest this useless and hopeless regret for Cameron becomes too apparent to Sir Paget.'

'I cannot help it, however wrong and sinful it may be,' she replied. 'I do my best. I let myself love him from the first moment I met him, and knew that he loved me—loved me well—before the secret

escaped him. Many have admired me, but,' she added, simply and sweetly, 'no one ever spoke to me before as Evan spoke, and I gave him all the love of my heart; but to cherish it is, I grant you, hopeless now.'

'Hopeless as mine; for now Allan, I fear, loathes me, if he thinks of me at all,' said Olive.

'I am very tired, Olive,' observed the other girl, 'of trying to compel duty to triumph over sorrow.'

In her soft hazel eyes there was the expression of one who was always looking far away at some horizon unseen by others. Sir Paget was not so dull or so slow as not to perceive all this, and to draw his own deductions therefrom. A change had decidedly come over him since he detected her emotion on the day the Black Watch marched, and he had become captious,

fractious, jealous, and inclined to be sneering, while watchful of every expression in her face.

In the library one day she was looking at a terrestrial globe on a tall and handsome stand. She saw that, as the crow flies, the distance was two thousand five hundred miles at least to where the Black Watch were face to face with the swarthy followers of Arabi; and, stooping, she pressed her lips to Egypt in general.

'*He* is there—I here! On the globe, how short the distance seems!'

'What *are* you about, Lady Puddicombe?' said a voice, sharply, behind her—the voice of Sir Paget, who was jerking his bald head forward most alarmingly. 'Kissing a globe!—what tomfoolery—what strange fancy is this?'

'I was only examining it,' she faltered.

'Only examining it!' he snarled; 'very,

closely apparently, and in what quarter did your geographical studies lie? Why, your lips were absolutely upon it.'

'A giddiness came over me,' replied Eveline, ashamed alike of her sudden emotion and enforced duplicity.

He eyed her viciously, and his eyes glittered dangerously.

'At luncheon this afternoon you were more dull and *distraite* even than I have seen you before,' said he, peering at her through his gold *pince-nez*. 'Now, pray, what was the meaning of that? What ails you—what oppresses you?'

'It is very wrong. I cannot help it,' urged the girl, desperately.

'Like all the rest of the world, you were thinking of—I suppose, Egypt?'

'I was, Sir Paget.'

'D—n Egypt, and everyone there!' exclaimed the baronet, coarsely and savagely.

'What is Egypt to you, madam, in particular?'

'My brother——'

'Your brother—bosh, madam, bosh! Don't think to hoodwink me. A young married lady should always make herself agreeable, especially to her husband; it is one of the first principles of good-breeding and of wifely quality.'

Eveline coloured with pain and keen annoyance at what these remarks implied; but Sir Paget in his anger was not disposed to content himself with them alone.

'Kissing a globe, indeed! To my mind it is evident that you think less of your brother than of your brother's friend—that fellow Cameron,' he exclaimed, giving full swing to his jealousy. 'He comes, I believe, of a decent stock enough; but that should not have encouraged him to act like

the other adventurer Holcroft with your cousin, and dare to raise his eyes to you.'

'A decent stock—an adventurer!' repeated Eveline; and then, as she thought of Evan Cameron's long line of warlike and heroic ancestors, as compared with the peculiar line of the Puddicombes, she laughed bitterly, while Sir Paget eyed her questioningly, and said,

'It is fortunate you were separated. Well, I suppose you won't die of a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, like the girls we see on the stage and read about in novels.'

Roused at last by these coarse taunts, Eveline said,

'Sir Paget, I thought you were ignorant of the ways and meannesses of the fashionable world; don't, please, adopt those of sneering and being jealous—if, indeed,

that world is ever jealous, or can love enough to be so.'

And, turning away, she took refuge in a gush of tears, inspired by intense mortification, while Olive caressed and strove to soothe her.

'An absurd old man!' exclaimed Olive, angrily—'a widower, too, who began life by loving and marrying another—how dare he treat you thus?'

'Oh, Olive, how shall I ever pass all the long years before I die, and with *him*, not Evan?'

'My darling—hush—this will never do,' urged Olive, who became alarmed by the chance of some new *esclandre*.

'I don't understand all this, Lady Aberfeldie,' said Sir Paget, greatly ruffled, when he saw that handsome and always serenely calm matron; 'your daughter is an enigma to me,' he added, ashamed to acknowledge

what he suspected and she perfectly knew. 'I sometimes surprise her in tears, and, if I ask the cause, she pleads a passage in a novel, or that her music made her sad. Stuff and nonsense! I should like to see the book or hear the music that would wring tears from me.'

'Try change of scene,' said Lady Aberfeldie.

Daily Eveline's hazel eyes seemed to become larger and brighter, while her face grew paler, and all the delicate rose-leaf colour and complexion faded out of it. The lines of her young features, if sorrowful, were very sweet, and her eyes, if somewhat sad, seemed calm in expression now. Yet the girl had ever before her the last *haunting* look that Evan gave her as he marched past, amid the wild hurly-burly of the dense crowd that surged around the departing Black Watch—the

long, silent, and indescribable look of those who gaze their last upon the silent dead; for dead she was to him!

At times, when quite alone, she would linger on her knees, in prayer for his safety, and that his days should be ever happy—often with her open Bible before her, but without looking at it, like many honest folks, as if to have it there would work a spell.

Her life, as yet, was one of constant dread—the effort to hide her anxiety and sorrow, with her recent love for another, under a hollow smile. She feared even to sleep, lest in a dream the name of Evan might escape her.

She would get over all this nonsense in time, her mother thought; for in time people get over everything.

Sir Paget thought he would take that lady's advice, and try change of scene;

and conceiving, not unwisely, that she would be infinitely better away from the military associations of Portsmouth—the incessant arrival and departure of crowded transports, the marching in and out, the bugling, drumming, and drilling daily and hourly of 'those infernal soldiers' on the grassy common between Puddicombe Villa and Southsea Castle, he resolved to take her abruptly to his house in London, though the season was long since over, the town and the parks empty—not that the latter fact would affect Eveline in the least.

'He is taking me to London, Olive dear, away from you,' said she, sadly; for with Olive alone could she commune in secret.

'He is wise. London will not be associated with Evan Cameron. You cannot think so much there as here by the sea-shore.'

'I shall think of him, anywhere and everywhere.'

'Change of scene, faces, places, and people will do much. Try, dear, to forget.'

But poor Eveline only looked yearningly, and kissed the soft cheeks of her handsome cousin, with much caressing and many tears.

CHAPTER II.

AT TEL-EL-KEBIR.

A LETTER from Allan Graham to Lady Aberfeldie proved, by its introduction, a very bitter one to Olive, and the source of many tears.

'Belbeis, September.

'MY DEAREST MOTHER,

'But for Evan Cameron of Ours saving my life at the risk of his own in action two days ago, I had not been alive to write you this letter—the first I have had time to attempt since we landed.

'Poor Evan!

'Whatever the mysterious influence was that that scoundrel Holcroft possessed over Olive is ended now, as I saw him fall into the sea, where he was drowned like a dog. I could not help him or save him, even had I been disposed to do so. Strange it is that a blackleg, a sharper, and worse, for such he became, should have been preferred by her at Dundargue to me, the companion and playmate of her childhood—her cousin, her affianced husband under her father's will, absurd in its tenor though that document be; and now, neither verbally nor in writing, shall I ever refer to her again. My pride—if I ever had any—has indeed been humbled in the dust, and by her!

'After quitting our camp on the evening before last, we moved to the sandhills above Kassassin, where we piled arms, and

the men lay upon the sand or sat in groups, all chatting gaily and hopefully of the coming conflict at Tel-el-Kebir.

'Carslogie, who was always in wild spirits, was busy spouting Shakespeare—

> "Thus far into the bowels of the land
> Have we marched on without impediment,—"

and so forth, and I overheard some of our men remarking that he "was surely *fey*," when word was passed to stand to our arms, unpile, and advance at one in the morning.

'Never before, perhaps, did fourteen thousand men get under arms so quietly, so softly. The orders were now issued in whispers, and, noiselessly as an army of phantoms, we moved off, our footfalls muffled by the soft sand. No moon was visible, but we had a clear, starlit Egyptian sky overhead. No man was per-

mitted to speak or smoke, and our brown helmets, red serges, and dark kilts seemed to blend with the gloom.

'If the silence of that weird, solemn, and impressive time were broken, it was by the occasional rumble of an artillery wheel or of a commissariat waggon, the clatter of a rammer or a steel scabbard against a stirrup-iron, as we advanced through the gloom, expecting every moment to hear the explosion of a musket or a shrill shout from the scattered Bedouin horsemen, who were alleged to be scouting in the vicinity—men belonging to the band of the Sheikh Zeid-el-Ourdeh.

'Dear mother, our Highland Brigade led the advance—thank God for the honour!—with the Indian contingent under Sir Hugh Macpherson, having the veteran Albany Highlanders as our support.

'Ever and anon there were brief halts to enable the regiments to maintain touch on the flanks.

'I cannot describe the order of our advance as yet, nor would you understand it if I did so.

'A silence that seemed something awful reigned over the vast plain, and none save the initiated could have imagined that, formed in a species of semi-circle, fourteen thousand men were approaching the enemy's earthworks, ready to dash at them like hounds at the deer when the leash is slipped.

'Arabi's lines consisted of solid entrenchments, bound together with wattles, four miles in extent from flank to flank, heavily armed with cannon, and having ditches about nine feet deep.

'The 74th Highlanders were next the canal, opposed to the most formidable

part of these works, where many of their dead are lying on their faces shoulder to shoulder, shot down in the act of charging; next them were the Cameron, the Gordon Highlanders, and then ourselves, the Black Watch, each company with its piper in the rear, ready to strike up the onset when the time came.

'Every heart was swelling proudly and wildly then, with the grand conviction that every heart at home in Britain—and dearer still among our native hills—would exult in our triumph, for a triumph it was sure to be.

'Silently, swiftly, and noiselessly we swept forward to the attack. No word was spoken, no command given save in a whisper, and not a shot was fired, as, with fixed bayonets, we came within three hundred yards of the Egyptian batteries, and

even then the soldiers of Arabi seemed unaware of our presence.

'Suddenly an alarm was given, and a terrific fire—a literal garland of flame—flashed along the bulwarks, a storm of lead went whistling over our helmets, and the air seemed laden with the pinging and whizzing of bullets, while cannon boomed hoarsely, and the roaring rockets screamed high in the air.

'The pipes struck up along the Highland line, a wild cheer burst from every man, and we advanced with a furious and headlong rush, flinging ourselves into the ditches and climbing up the scarp; all weariness after the toilsome night-march was gone; sore feet and thirst were alike forgotten.

'And now for the first time the voices of the officers were heard: "Come on,

Camerons—this way, the Gordons—forward, the Black Watch!" The marines and the Irish regiments were on the right, and bravely they went at the trenches, too; but the *first* within them were the Highlanders, and the first of these was young Donald Cameron, of the Camerons, who, as he leaped in with bayonet fixed, was shot through the head just as we carried the first line of works.

'The dim light of the early morning enabled the enemy now to direct their fire; for a minute or two we drew breath, poured in some heavy file-firing, and again dashed on, while one portion of our forces that had passed between the redoubts now opened a flank fusilade, which proved too much for the Egyptians, who—all save their wretched gunners, who were chained to the cannon—fled wildly across the open, where our fire mowed them down in hun-

dreds, while they rent the air with cries of, "Ya Allah! ya mobarek!" (O God! O Blessed!)

'Then it was that our brigadier rode up and said to the 79th, "Well done, the Cameron men! Will not Scotland be proud of this day's work!"

'So much for our share of it.

'On the other flank of the works, the Horse Artillery were pouring in shell, till the Royal Irish carried them at the bayonet's point, after a regular hand-to-hand fight, in which Major Hart shot an Egyptian leader, who endeavoured to wrest away his revolver.

'Our troops swept over the batteries on every hand, and the enemy fled as rapidly and hopelessly as those on the other side of the Canal had fled before the Highlanders, whose costume and fury alike terrified them. Arabi, we are told, informed

his people that "the Scottish soldiers were only old women;" but now they dub us demons.

'To hear our pipes send up their pæan of victory over the battered and corpse-strewn trenches of Tel-el-Kebir, was to feel for a time that exultation of the soul which is said to be worth a long life of dull and sluggish quiet.

'The Egyptians did not present the least appearance of order, but fled, a demoralised rabble, at the top of their speed, flinging away everything that might impede their flight, and pursued by our cavalry and Horse Artillery, who mowed them down like sheep.

'As one battery swept past the flank of the Black Watch, the gunners brandished their swords and shouted 'Scotland for ever!' and then we knew them to belong to the new division of Scottish Artillery.

'To hear that cry in such a time of supreme triumph was to make one feel what those must have felt, who heard it raised by the Greys at Waterloo and by the Albany Highlanders at Kotah.

'The total casualties of the Highland Brigade are two hundred and twenty of all ranks.

'One of the first we lost was poor Carslogie, the life of the mess. He was shot by a wounded Egyptian, to whom he had just given a mouthful from his water-bottle, and I blew out the miscreant's brains.

'We have also to sorrow for our noble Serjeant-Major, John M'Neill, whose tall and soldier-like figure was long a feature at the head of the column. He cut down several Egyptians with his claymore, but fell at last, pierced by three wounds. He was, we know, the sole support of a

widowed mother, to whom he was tenderly attached.

'The fight was fought and won in the good old British fashion, with the cold steel; the breech-loader has not yet rendered the bayonet obsolete.

'The Guards and Highlanders made themselves at home among the tents and spoils of the Egyptians; but our soldiers, flushed with glory and fresh from conquest, no more spoke of the Gordons, the Ross-shire Buffs, or the Black Watch, but of Donald Cameron of the Camerons—the young hero from the Braes of Angus, who was the first in Tel-el-Kebir!

'Who could say what heroic blood was in his veins, for his name was old as the hills, when the Camerons were known as the children of the Follower of Ovi.

'I had some narrow escapes. A ball carried away the pommel of my dirk. I

had a bayonet thrust through my kilt, and two shells exploded near me, covering me with sand; but I had a closer shave than that. In the rush as I led on my company, two powerful Egyptians in white uniforms, with scarlet tarbooshes, seemed to devote their energies to killing me, as an officer or prominent leader. Both attacked me with their fixed bayonets. By a circular parry of my claymore, I turned one of them aside, and ran the man through—or near—the heart. He screamed and grappled me by the throat, dragged me down amid the blood-soaked sand. So savage and powerful was his death-grip that had he failed to strangle me, I must have perished under the bayonet of the other, whom Cameron cut down, through tarboosh and bone to the chin, and then released me. A third who came up he pistolled, and I hope Evan will get a clasp to his V.C. for this.

'The papers will, of course, tell you all the rest—how we captured the standing camp and immense stores of provisions and plunder; how the victorious troops advanced with tremendous cheers across it to the railway station, where soon after Sir Garnet came up; and how Drury Lowe with his cavalry cut across the enemy's line of flight, killing and capturing on every hand.

'I know how my father, with his great love of the old Black Watch, will appreciate the story of our glory at Tel-el-Kebir; but the aspect of the place was awful after the firing ceased and the sun came up in his morning splendour—a sight never to forget, though I have seen some terrible work in India.

'The dead lay about in scores and hundreds, many disembowelled by shot or shell; some with brains oozing out; others

with their heads literally blown off; and some were scorched to death by their clothing becoming ignited by the flame of an exploded shell. There were wounds of every kind—by the bayonet, the rifle-butt, and sword; and many of the maimed were seen to cast aside their tarboosh and bury their head in the sand for coolness, while the cries for water were simply agonising.

'I found the third Egyptian from whom Cameron's pistol had saved me. He was dying. "Turn my head towards Mecca," I heard him say faintly to a comrade who lay near him. The fellah did so, and the poor wretch passed away in peace. I saw some who died making signs of the cross, but these, of course, were Coptic Christians.

'Two ill omens, it is said, occurred before the conflict to chill the ardour of the Egyptians. In the fight of Kassassin a

man was shot through the heart by a rifle ball, which pierced a copy of the Koran that he carried there as a charm, and took a part of it into his body. The other was the crescent of the new moon, which encircled a star and sank with it below the horizon just before the attack, and this, being emblematic of the crescent and star, was deemed ominous of defeat and destruction.

'Arabi has fled towards Belbeis, pursued by Drury Lowe.

'The canal is filled with dead and dying men and horses, yet our men are fain to fill their water-bottles from it.'

This letter concluded with kindest regards and wishes to everyone he knew and loved, by name—Olive Raymond alone excepted; and keenly and with tears she resented the omission.

In hot haste Lady Aberfeldie wrote to

Allan, explaining the story of Hawke Holcroft's surreptitious visits, his fancied power over Olive, and the abstraction of the unlucky diamonds; but owing to various circumstances—the fortune of war included—the letter was a considerable time of reaching him to whom it was addressed, and some stirring events occurred in the meantime, before he could reply to it.

CHAPTER III.

AT GRAND CAIRO.

The Black Watch had barely buried their dead at Tel-el-Kebir before they were sent by railway to Zag-a-zig; a breakdown occurred on the line, and the regiment slept for the night on the slope of the railway embankment. On reaching Zag-a-zig, more fighting was expected; but the Egyptians did not show face, so the Highlanders were marched to Belbeis, from whence Allan despatched the preceding letter.

Belbeis is now a little town, about forty miles from Grand Cairo, situated on the borders of the desert, famous in the Crusade of the twelfth century as the first place captured by the Saracens, and held by them as a fortified magazine for supplies, and to this day it has a trade in corn. In the same century it made a vigorous resistance to Amurath of Jerusalem, and in more modern times it was occupied by the French army to keep open the communication between Cairo and the coast. Here a junction takes place of the canals derived from different parts of the Nile.

It had been reached by our cavalry on the evening of the day Tel-el-Kebir was captured, and after a slight skirmish was taken possession of by Drury Lowe.

The Black Watch was eight days at Belbeis, during which they had scarcely

any other food than hard biscuits and a small supply of tinned meat, with muddy water from the canal to wash them down with; and as the knapsacks did not come in from Tel-el-Kebir for five days, neither officer nor private could have any change, but slept in the kilt without blanket or other covering, while nearly driven mad by mosquitoes, sand-flies, and other plagues of Egypt.

Arabi and Toulba Pasha had been taken prisoners, and nothing was spoken of now but the advance on Grand Cairo.

Meantime the surrender of the Egyptian position at Kafr Dowar took place. On its frowning batteries white flags in token of peace were everywhere displayed, and our troops entered without resistance. The terrible lesson taught the enemy at Tel-el-Kebir was not likely to be soon

forgotten. Moreover, the firing of the Egyptian infantry was always rather defective, their Remington rifles being sighted much too high for short distances; thus, at the long range, their firing was always better than at close quarters.

From Belbeis General Lowe pushed on towards the capital, keeping on the borders of the desert. At every village he passed through, the swarthy population came pouring forth waving white flags and declaring themselves faithful to the Khedive, while masses of flying fugitives, on seeing our cavalry overtaking them, threw down their rifles and made signs of submission.

Galloping on without drawing rein, our cavalry entered Grand Cairo, after a forced march of fifty miles in thirty hours in heavy marching order, and by that act practically ended the war, and our troops

had no adversaries now but the savage and plunder-loving Bedouins, who hovered and hung upon their skirts intent upon rapine and murder, as Allan Graham and some others ere long found to their cost.

The advance to Cairo was headed by the Bengal Horse, led in person by Sir Hugh Macpherson, though General Lowe was in command of the whole.

On the 22nd of the month the Black Watch left Belbeis for Grand Cairo, where the corps arrived in the evening, when the last rays of the setting sun tinted with the hue of blood and saffron the water of the Nile as it wound past the islets near El Ghizeh—flushed and red, as on the evening when, in long ages past, according to Mohammedan legends, Joseph sank Jacob's marble coffin in the stream; and it was with no ordinary emotion of admira-

tion and interest that Allan and his comrades beheld the capital of Egypt basking in the sun ere he went down beyond the hills.

'Skirted by groves and gardens,' says a writer, 'its light airy structures seem to be based upon a mass of verdure; long lines of buildings, white, glittering, and infinitely varied in form, rise beyond each other, and the palace and citadel, cresting a steep projection of the Mokattam ridge, conduct the eye to the vast rocky barrier which protects "the victorious city" from the blasts of the desert.'

Streets of lofty and latticed houses abounding in carved balconies and florid arcades; the mosques, with delicate domes and airy minarets, covered with tracery and arabesques; the houses of beys and grandees; the fortified abodes of the stern old Mamelukes, now those of Egyptian

nobles, recalling in their architecture the Moorish glories of the Alhambra and the Alcazar of Cordova—a perpetual dream of the Arabian Nights.

Even with night the bustle in its streets did not cease; the coffee-houses and hotels were filled with light, and, in the warm atmosphere, teemed with outdoor life, for there all who are afoot have lanterns, and there were the tellers of Arabian tales, the Nubian singer with his mandolin, and the Egyptian magician performing such tricks as one might think the devil alone could do; and now once again, as in the days of General Hutchison, the walls and towers of 'the Queen of Cities'—El Kahira of the fatalistic caliphs—re-echoed to the British drum and the Scottish warpipe, as the Highlanders defiled round it to their camp, where the tents were pitched outside the walls.

The soldiers were not allowed to enter the city, except on duty or with a pass, and, as a general rule, the latter was chiefly given to sergeants. This plan did not, of course, apply to officers, thus Allan, Evan Cameron, and some others lost no time in making their way to an European hotel, where something better than the repasts they had partaken of at Belbeis and elsewhere could be procured, and where, amid a somewhat polyglot society, consisting of Greeks and Egyptians, Hungarians and Cypriotes, they supped at an open window on a balcony overlooking a street abounding with bazaars, and lanterns swinging to and fro, crowded by people and innumerable vendors of street goods —turbaned or tarbooshed—the water-seller tinkling his dishes and quoting the Koran; the sellers of melons, of cresses and lily roots, of flowers of henna, where-

with to dye the nails of copper-coloured damsels; little donkeys ambling everywhere, and now and then a huge camel swaying along; and more than once the procession of a harem returning from the evening bath—the women enveloped in black garments and veils, with masks of white linen.

Amid the scenes of warfare the organ of wonder becomes blunted considerably, and thus after a time Allan, soothed by the fumes of a fragrant havannah, and weary, perhaps, with the events of a long day—the entraining and detraining of the regiment, its baggage and stores, and so forth—fell sound asleep in his chair, oblivious of the clatter of voices in the large room of the hotel, and the many sounds in the street below; while Cameron, re-entering the room, idled over

an album of views of Grand Cairo and its vicinity.

Allan's short sleep was a restless one, for there came before him a vivid recollection or vision of Hawke Holcroft, and his pale face, with its last expression of horror and despair, as the waves closed over it and sucked him down.

A little cry that escaped him made Cameron look his way, and he saw a man, in the dim light without, regarding Allan with a fixed and hostile expression. He was clad somewhat like a European, but wore a tarboosh, with a blue tassel, and had a voluminous beard; and his eyes seemed savage and sinister in expression.

It is said that there is some mysterious and magnetic force in a long and fixed stare or gaze; and there is, it is also said, 'within us some vigilant quality that

is only exercised when every other faculty is at rest, that permits all ordinary sounds to pass unheeded while we sleep, but that instinctively sounds the alarm when anything unusual or fraught with danger is at hand.'

Be all that as it may, Allan suddenly awoke, and started up, and the watcher as suddenly vanished, but not before his pale and sinister face had been seen by the wakener.

Cameron sprang out on the balcony. There was no one there, save his comrade, and it was evident that the lurker must have passed into the hotel by some other window.

'A dream,' muttered Allan, looking rather confused, 'a dream of that wretch Holcroft. Why should his face haunt me? I did not kill him—he drowned himself; and I need have no more re-

morse for that affair than for pistoling the fellow who shot poor Carslogie.'

'Whether the cause of your dream or not,' said Cameron, who was too genuine a Highlander to be without a considerable spice of superstition in his nature, 'a fellow lurked beside you whose look I little liked.'

'What was his appearance?'

'Difficult to describe in the dim light, but the gleam of his eyes was sinister. Some disbanded Egyptian turned thief, most likely. But he bolted the moment I approached, and you awoke.'

'All this is a strange coincidence,' said Allan, as he lit another cigar; and they turned their steps towards the camp without the walls. 'But I am not much given to dreaming, and our work has been too hard for some time past for indulgence in long naps, yet I had a strange and

creeping sense of some evil presence near me, with a pain that was strange and intolerable.'

But Allan had not seen the last of the man with the tarboosh.

Before returning from history to our narrative and the adventures of our friends, it is impossible to omit reference to the impression made on the population of Alexandria by the warlike aspect and stately bearing of the Black Watch and other Highland regiments at the review, in the great square before the Abdin Palace, the official residence of the Khedive, whom our forces had now restored to place and power.

To see our eighteen thousand troops go past, the palace was crowded, not only at every window, but on its flat roof, and the Viceroy's wife, who had shared all his perils, was there with her children,

and the closely-veiled ladies of the harem. The streets were lined by multitudes of curious but stolid Egyptians, not more inclined to hiss than cheer, feeling no sense of shame for their recent defeats and humiliation, but only one of quiet amusement and desire to behold a spectacle that did not cost them a piastre.

After the blue jackets, the Guards, and others had passed, the brass bands stopped, and then were heard the pipes and drums, as, led by its one-armed general, the Highland Brigade, every company steady and straight as a wall, the ranks well 'locked-up,' every officer and man looking stately and graceful in his waving tartan, came on at a swinging pace, amid mutterings of *Scozzezi diaboli nudi.*

Their general, Sir Archibald Alison, in honour of the occasion, wore a sprig of his native heather in his helmet. The idea

had got abroad, said the *Times*, 'that the Highlanders, who bore the brunt of the fighting, who were the first in the trenches, and who suffered most severely, had been rather ungenerously ignored in official despatches. At all events, the crowd seemed disposed to grant unofficial honours, for the second cheer of the day was accorded to the Black Watch, easily distinguished by their red plumes, and led by Colonel Macpherson, also sporting the heather,' and exciting more interest even than our brown-clad Punjabees or the Belooches, in their black and red uniforms, tall and strapping fellows though they were; and with them came the heroes of Candahar, the Seaforth Highlanders, wearing Mackenzie tartan, covered with medals, and marching past as old Scottish soldiers can.

Then it was that the *Times* reporter

heard an Italian say, '*Poveri Egiziani!* If you had only seen them before, instead of *after!*'

The Black Watch were halted for a minute or two, prior to marching back to camp, when suddenly Cameron said to Allan, in a loud whisper,

'Look—there is the fellow I saw on the hotel balcony.'

Allan turned, and amid a crowd of Egyptians, Italians, and jabbering and gesticulating *bheesties* and *syces* (water-carriers and grass-cutters), belonging to our Indian contingent, he saw a man with a fair beard and a pallid face regarding him steadily with keen eyes and knitted brow; but, the moment he turned towards him, the stranger shrank back amid the crowd, and disappeared.

'Hawke Holcroft, by heaven,' exclaimed Cameron.

'Impossible! He is dead,' replied Allan, feeling curiously uncomfortable nevertheless.

'I would I were as sure of a thousand guineas,' said Cameron.

'One reads of such things only in romances—yet the eyes and beard were the colour of those of Holcroft.'

'Truth is always strange—"stranger than fiction," as Byron tells us.'

'Stranger, indeed, should this prove the case. But, if alive, how comes he here, and why does he seem to dog me?'

'I regarded him at first vacantly, then with indistinct recognition, and anon with certainty, though the beard and red tarboosh disguise him so much!'

Allan Graham knew not what to think. If the man referred to was actually Holcroft, by what miracle was he then in Grand Cairo, and how was he rescued from

the sea? Strange it was, indeed, that if the lurker at the hotel was he, Allan should dream of him at the moment of his appearance in the balcony.

'There is always a skeleton in every fellow's cupboard, and Hawke Holcroft was the skeleton in mine, poor devil!' said Allan.

'You are still disposed to think and speak of him in the past tense?' observed Cameron, whose mind was made up as to his identity.

'I cannot do otherwise, but the moment the parade is dismissed we shall make inquiries at the hotel.'

They did so, but in vain. No person of that name or appearance was known there.

Instead of being put into the comfortable barracks of Kasr-el-Nil in the city, the Highland Brigade was kept in camp while October and November crept on, and this

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time was not entirely a peaceable one; for in the former month the Bedouins, who were greatly puzzled with their garb, and conceived them to be the English soldiers' wives all camped in one quarter, thought to make a dash there, and secure a few 'moon faces' to embellish their tents in the desert.

A body of them belonging to the band or tribe of Zeid-el-Ourdeh, the sheikh of Jebel Dimeshk, a mountain range that lies north-eastward of Grand Cairo, came swooping down upon the Highland lines with this view, and a result which very much bewildered them, for the Scottish forces turned out with rifles and fixed bayonets, and in a very few minutes more than forty amorous Bedouins bit their native dust.

On several other occasions the spiteful natives amused themselves by firing at a

distance among the tents at random, and one evening a bullet whistled through Allan's tent within an inch of his head, thus necessitating some severe patrol duty.

It was while encamped here that he received Lady Aberfeldie's letter explaining the apparently false position in which the villainy of Holcroft—combined with his spite, avarice, and desperation—contrived to place Olive Raymond.

'Look here, Evan,' said Allan, to his *fidus* Achates, in a grumbling tone, 'read this letter from the mater. I don't know what to think of this strange story; but, without some other proofs, if she thinks we are going to kiss again with tears as the poet has it, she is very much mistaken. The mater says that Olive's own unruly heart has perhaps made a shipwreck of her life, whatever that may mean.

Poor girl, what a fool she was not to confide more completely in me!'

In his tone tenderness was blended with bitterness and regret.

From this little speech Cameron was hopeful that all would come right in the end; but a short time was given them to think or talk over the matter, as both were hurriedly sent with a detachment consisting of about half-a-company—Allan, of course, in command—to a place called Matarieh, near Heliopolis, to take part there in a demonstration against the prowling Bedouins among the mountain ranges that overlook the desert traversed by the disused railway that ran from Cairo towards the plain of Muggreh.

And for this place, which lies some miles north-east of Cairo, they marched accordingly, taking with them provisions, ammunition, and tents, for the modern village

was a small one, situated among the ruins of the ancient town, which was deserted far back as the days of Strabo, and is now to be traced only in extensive mounds of earth and a noble obelisk nearly seventy feet in height; and there disasters occurred which Allan Graham was fated never to forget.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TELEGRAM.

'By Jingo, there is old Pudd's carriage at the door, and his wife in it—a deuced fine girl, a stunning girl indeed!'

'Queer time this, to bring her up to London, when there is not a soul in town.'

'Perhaps that is the very reason he has done so.'

'I'll invite old Pudd down to the cub-hunting, and, if he brings her with him, won't I improve the shining hour!'

The speakers were two very *blasé* but good-looking young men, who were lounging in the bay window of the otherwise empty room of a stately club-house overlooking Pall Mall, then lonely, dusty, rather sun-baked, and the chief figures in which were the sentinels of the Guards at the War-Office and Marlborough House, and who, with no small interest, had seen Sir Paget Puddicombe's open carriage drop him at the door, where he waved his hand to Eveline as she drove away to shop or go round the park.

Now, Sir Harry Hurdell, a sporting baronet, well known on the turf and at Tattersall's, and his chief chum, Mr. Pyke Poole, a famous hand at billiards, more skilled with the cue than any marker in London, were not Sir Paget's style of men, for both were horsey, fast, given to gambling and loose living, but both were an-

xious to stand in the good graces of one who, as they phrased it, 'was proprietor of such a devilish handsome girl.'

They had not seen him since his marriage, on which both complimented and congratulated him in such well-chosen terms that he felt quite flattered, and his heart warmed to them.

It flashed upon him that by the society of other young men it was possible to neutralise—if he did nothing more—the recollection of Evan Cameron in the mind of Eveline, and thus it was that he said,

'We are quite alone in town, but will you dine with us to-day?'

'With pleasure—delighted—charmed to be introduced to Lady Puddicombe,' said Sir Harry, with a swift glance at his friend Poole.

'Sharp eight, then. I daresay our *chef* will not fail us.'

'All right.'

'Good-morning,' and away he went.

The friends looked at each other, each with an eye half closed, and then laughed heartily.

'I'll have him down at the Hall for the cub-hunting,' said Sir Harry, 'and have other sport than that. She'll soon get tired of her fogie—is bound to do so. What young girl could tolerate such an old pump, and why shouldn't I go in and win at a canter?'

'Hawke Holcroft knew her people, didn't he?'

'Yes—before he came a cropper altogether. When last I heard of him he was actually a visitor at their place, Aberfeldie, wherever that may be.'

Eveline heard with total indifference that they were to have guests that even-

ing, and with all his admiration of her Sir Paget thought,

'What a fool I was to marry her, knowing or suspecting what I did—that she loved that fellow—loved him first (me she never loved at all) and last, and loves him now, no doubt. They say no woman ever forgets her first love, simply because he *was* her first. Pleasant for me!'

Like the hero of a recent novel, 'he could not forget that his wife had loved another man better than she ever loved or even pretended to love him. It was her *candour* he felt most keenly. Had she been willing to play the hypocrite, to pretend a little, he would have been much better pleased.'

She loved Evan still; but it was with a love purified of every sensuous thought, of every earthly hope.

To Sir Paget the story of how Allan's

life had been saved at Tel-el-Kebir by Cameron was a source of profound irritation, annoyance, and mortification, as he knew but too well how the event must enhance the latter in the estimation of Eveline, in whose heart gratitude and admiration for high courage would now be added to love. He would rather have heard that the two friends had been shot down together.

With all her secret love for Evan, she was too wise and modest to desire ever to be face to face with him again. She felt that they had parted in the belvidere at Maviswood never to meet again; that henceforward he was as if dead to her; but it was a delicious privilege to hear of him and of his bravery, and that her dear brother owed his life to Evan's courage and Evan's sword.

She felt that a change had come over

the tenor of Sir Paget's ways of late, more especially since the episode of Tel-el-Kebir.

Not a day—scarcely an hour—passed over her head in which she was not made to feel keenly the utter want of sympathy that existed between herself and the man to whom she had been married by her parents—sold by them—as in the bitterness of her heart she thought it.

He said sharp things to her, and made bitter asides when Egypt or the war there was casually mentioned, as, of course, it constantly was; he shot many a poisoned arrow; but Eveline never blushed, though she felt a calm, cold scorn at the cruelty and injustice of such conduct.

So here were a couple bound together by the strongest of all the legal ties, yet utterly unsuited to each other by age,

thought, and habits; yet most punctilious was poor Eveline in the performance of every wifely duty she owed her captious old man; but a sickly dread of coming sorrow pervaded the girl's mind every morning she quitted her pillow, and it came sharply and surely at last.

To dare to look at a newspaper was sufficient to worry him.

'So, so,' he would say; 'thus it is—is it? Egypt and the Black Watch. D—n the Black Watch, I say! Where is the affection that you as a good woman——'

'I am only a girl,' she urged, piteously.

'As a good woman, say I, should feel for her husband after marriage, even if she felt none of it for him before that little ceremony—for little and trivial doubtless it may appear to you, madam—and your regard for me should be all the

deeper and more lasting that no vain protestations preceded it.'

Eveline made no response, but resumed her occupation of gazing listlessly from the back window of the drawing-room into one of those dull and flowerless London gardens which a writer has truly described as looking 'like a burial place without any graves;' so Sir Paget returned to the charge.

'It is said, when love fails to beget love, it often engenders hatred. Is it so, madam?'

'Not in our case, I hope,' said Eveline, wearily, as she sighed, and her slender foot in its satin shoe began to tap the carpet with nervous impatience. 'Why did you marry me—buy me from papa?' she asked, with a tone and bearing a little unusual in her, she was ever so gentle and meek.

'I married you because I admired your beauty, and believed in the love that would come after marriage—the love that is grounded not on childish fancy, but on tried friendship and esteem.'

'Then you believed in too much,' said Eveline, driven desperate.

'Too much?' he repeated, changing colour, and jerking his head forward.

'Yes, Sir Paget.'

'Indeed! I asked you to be my wife in full assurance that I should never find my confidence in you misplaced.'

'You asked mamma rather, and your confidence has *not* been misplaced.'

Then she paused and coloured deeply for the first time, as she recalled that painful and passionate interview in the belvidere at Maviswood, and Evan Cameron's farewell glance; two episodes that seemed to have happened years ago.

Thus had a life of jealousy and 'nagging' begun for poor Eveline—a life that was ere long to become almost insupportable—for the most trivial matter was liable to misconstruction, or to excite suspicion.

If her eye followed a soldier in the street, which, as the daughter of a line of soldiers, was in her not unnatural; if she ventured to speak of the news of the day, or glance at a public journal, he watched her; it was 'Egypt again!' that she was thinking about; and, sooth to say, in that suspicion he was not far wrong.

Punctually a few minutes before eight, Sir Harry Hurdell and his friend Mr. Pyke Poole were ushered into the drawing-room, and she received them with as much sweetness, ease, and grace as if no gloomy conversation had preceded their appear-

ance, and she and Sir Paget billed and cooed from hour to hour.

Fresh from the clever hands of Clairette her toilet was perfection, and her appearance excited the admiration of her husband's friends, who were both connoisseurs of female beauty, and disposed to be all the more appreciative that the husband was, as they thought, 'such a devil of a fogie.'

'I mean to have Sir Paget down at my place for a little cub-hunting,' said Sir Harry, glancing in a mirror at his accurately-parted fair hair and pointed moustache; 'and, if so, I hope you will accompany him. My sister Lucretia will make you most welcome, Lady Puddicombe.'

Ere Eveline could respond, Sir Paget warmly accepted for both, again believing

much in change of scene and change of society.

'I can mount you to perfection, Sir Paget, or you may send down your own horses,' said Sir Harry, his eyes wandering in secret admiration over the fair face, the soft, hazel eyes, and delicate contour of Eveline's head, neck, and little white ears.

Sir Paget thought he would prefer his own. Strange horses had often tricks that might prove troublesome to a cavalier of his years and proportions, and it was carried that the first week of October was to find him and Lady Puddicombe at Hurdell Hall. But Sir Paget could little foresee the terrible and startling events to which the apparently simple acceptance of a hospitable invitation was to lead.

'You have just come from the club, I

presume?' said Sir Paget to his brother baronet.

'Yes; just waited to see the last telegrams in the reading-room.'

'Anything fresh from Egypt?' lisped Mr. Poole, with his glass wedged in his eye.

'Only a single telegram, which, by the way, must interest *you*, Lady Puddicombe,' said Sir Harry, with a most serious inflection of his voice.

'Me—how?' faltered Eveline, feeling herself grow paler, if possible, than she really was.

'It refers to your brother.'

'My brother!'

She was pale to her quivering lips now.

'Yes; it states that an officer of the Black Watch had been killed in action with the Bedouins, and was buried in the sand of the desert by his friend, the Master of Aberfeldie.'

'And the officer's name?' said Sir Paget, icily.

'Was Evan Cameron.'

'Cameron!' repeated the dry lips of Eveline, who suddenly felt as one in a dreadful dream.

Dead and buried; buried in the sand of the Egyptian desert! Did she hear aright—was this happening to herself or to some one else? She made an effort to speak, but her tongue had lost its power.

'Eveline,' she heard her husband say, 'your wits have gone wool-gathering.'

'I beg your pardon, Sir Paget. What is it?' she asked, faintly.

'*Sir!* Can't you call me Paget?' said he; and the two guests exchanged glances as much as to say,

'What is up now?'

At that moment the dinner-gong sound-

ed, and giddily and mechanically she took the proffered arm of Sir Harry.

Never while life lasted would Eveline forget the grotesque horror of that little dinner, with the solemn servants in attendance, and all its splendid yet, to her, sickening details and talk, the references to marriages and races—hurdle, steeple, and others—on the *tapis*, of flirtations and gossip—how terrible, how ghastly they all sounded to her, who felt as if in a mist, out of which their voices seemed to come hollowly, and from a vast distance, and she was compelled to listen with one face—a dead face—coming out of that mist before her!

CHAPTER V.

DEAD AND BURIED IN THE SAND.

How she acquitted herself as hostess, how she got through that dinner, with its many *entrées* and courses, from the soup to the fruit, she never knew. It passed like a phantasmagoria—a dreadful dream—but it was over at last; and, as one in a dream, while Sir Harry held open the door for her, she passed from the table, not to the drawing-room, as he naturally thought, and where he meant speedily to join her, but swiftly to rush

to her dressing-closet, to tear off her ornaments, and fling herself despairingly upon a couch.

She recalled her strong but daily presentiment that something was about to happen, though now the war in Egypt was virtually over, and that terrible something had happened at last.

Could the telegram have been a mistake? Improbable and impossible! Though brief, it seemed too distinct in its grim details.

She felt as if suffocating with grief, and her brain reeled at the feeble prospect of concealing it from the already exasperated Sir Paget.

She recalled Evan's words when he parted with her at Maviswood, and how prophetic they seemed now,

'I am going far away, my darling, and shall never see you again. That I may

find a grave in Egypt is the kindest wish you can have for me.'

And now he had found that grave, and he was buried by the hands of her brother Allan, not on the sunny slope of a dear highland hill, or in the grassy glen where his forefathers lay in Stratherroch, within sound of the waves of Lochiel, where the summer breezes and the summer birds would be about his tomb, and the clouds and shadows of a Scottish sky flit over it, but in the desolate sand of cruel and barren Egypt!

There had been no solemn ceremony by his grave; he had not even a coffin, perhaps, but was buried, as she had read of others being buried, in a blanket only, and there to lie in the wilderness, traversed by the antelope and jackal, till the last trumpet sounded.

She remembered his song at Dundargue.

Could it be that the manly and bright young face, the love-lit eyes, were dulled by death now, and that his fresh gay voice was hushed for ever?

'Dead!' wailed the girl in her heart. 'Oh, God, that he might be raised up as Lazarus was, even though we should never, never cross each other's paths again. My love—oh, my love!' she murmured, in a hushed voice, as if the walls might hear her.

'Only to the dead,' says the author of 'Mount Royal,' 'to the utterly lost and gone, is given this supreme passion—love sublimated to despair. From the living there is always something kept back, something saved and garnered for an after-gift, some reserve in the mind or heart of the giver; but to the dead, love gives all—with a wild self-abandonment which knows no restraint or measure.'

She had felt at first a dull, vague, sensation which became an acute pang when certainty came upon her; but she dared not as yet shed a tear.

Henceforward, as before, she had a part to act—that of indifference. If possible, there must be no pallid face shown, no haggard eyes; no tell-tale sighs must betray the agony of heart—the great sorrow that consumed her for the loss of her dead love; and wonderingly she looked at her white and already worn countenance in her mirror.

Oh, that Allan were returned! from him she would know all. Allan knew the secret of her heart, sympathised with it, and would relate everything; but she could not divest herself of an awful and haunting fancy that this tragedy—beyond the chances of military life—was her fault; and that in the recklessness and despair of

his heart, Evan Cameron had risked his life too rashly and lost it.

When this conviction came upon her, tears streamed down her cheeks—hot salt tears—which she made no effort to restrain; and on suddenly discovering her thus—after the departure of his guests, Sir Harry Hurdell and Mr. Poole—Sir Paget felt his soul stung with jealous fury.

He regarded her sternly rather than lovingly, and puffed out his chest with what he deemed an air of offended dignity. Yet he attempted to take her hand.

'Do not touch me,' said Eveline, imploringly; 'at least not just—just now.'

'Upon my word, madam! Do you understand what your romantic pity for this—this person implies?' he asked, grimly, while polishing his bald head with his handkerchief till it shone like a billiard ball.

'He has no father or mother—no sister to weep for him—none but myself to sorrow for him.'

'Well?'

'And he died like a gentleman, upholding the honour of Queen and country, and the name of Cameron,' said Eveline, a little defiantly.

'Bosh! I suppose he was paid for all that? But enough of this. May I ask, have you no home interests and home ties like other married women?'

Eveline made no reply; so, with a violent jerk of his head, Sir Paget spoke again.

'Listen to me, Lady Puddicombe.'

'I am doing so.'

'To me you seem like one of those oddities or evil spirits one reads of only in novels.'

'How?'

'Having had a romance in your life, or fancying you had one, and believing you have married the wrong man, and all that sort of stuff, you like to live and brood on a memory. Is it so, Lady Puddicombe? Answer me—did you actually love this fellow Cameron?'

'Yes,' she replied, wincing, as he laid his coarse hand rather roughly on her delicate shoulder.

'Indeed. And you love him still?'

'He is dead—he is dead—and perhaps it is a sin to brood over the past.'

'An infernal futility, at all events. All this is pleasant for me, madam,' said he, applying himself to polishing his pate again.

A wiser man might have partly ignored the affair, in the hope that it must in time

pass away; but her unmistakable emotion of grief for Cameron's death proved somewhat beyond the patience of Sir Paget, who recurred to it warmly.

'His demise, if untimely, is very natural; to face death and meet it was the trade he chose, and for which the country paid him, and well, too, as we shall find by next year's income-tax. What more would you have? Others quite as good as he—better perhaps—have fallen in this grotesque war, which, the Ministry tell us, is no war at all, though it will be deuced expensive work to us who have to stump-up for it,' he continued, waving his hand as he had done when addressing the same words to his constituents at Slough-cum-Sloggit. 'Moreover, madam, we can only die once, which is just as well. Who is it that likens the race of man to leaves on the trees?'

'But the leaves fall in autumn, not as he has done—my—my——'

'Love?' he suggested, with a gloomy sneer.

'No,' replied Eveline, quivering with anger.

'What then, madam?'

'My dear friend—my brother's comrade, and the saver of his life at Tel-el-Kebir.'

For some days the matter was not referred to; Sir Paget sulked a good deal, and dined often with his friend Hurdell at the club, while Eveline, in her dumb grief, felt like some piece of strange machinery that must go through the evolutions for which it was framed.

To Sir Paget she was an enraging enigma. Dead or alive, what was this Highland fellow now to her? But 'who,' asks a writer, 'in middle age, when the sordid cares of every-day life are para-

mount, can comprehend the young heart's passionate mystery—the love which, like some bright tropical flower, buds and blooms in a single day—the love which is more than fancy !'

But a fresh impetus was given to Sir Paget's jealous anger, and a keen edge put upon it, when a letter addressed to 'Lady Puddicombe' arrived one morning from Messrs. Horning and Tailzie, W.S., Edinburgh, anent 'the will of the late Evan Cameron, Esq., of Stratherroch,' informing her that by that document, he had bequeathed his estate of that name to her and her heirs, whom, failing, to those of his brother Duncan. The letter then proceeded to detail the encumbrances on the estate, which was rapidly freeing itself; that besides so much arable land there was fine grouse-shooting, extending to about eight thousand acres, yielding in favour-

able seasons about nine hundred brace of birds, besides black-game, snipe, ducks, and plover; that there was excellent trout-fishing in the river Erroch. It then described the mansion-house, stables, kennels, and so forth, and wound up by asking for 'her ladyship's instructions.'

There was a postscript, saying that 'the late Stratherroch seems to have been a prime favourite with the crofters on the estate, and they all deplore his untimely end, even with tears.'

'Oh, what does it all mean?' sighed Eveline, in utter anguish and bewilderment. The 'late'—how horrid—how awful did that single word look, when she recalled the yearning eyes, the farewell glance of Evan Cameron, as he marched past her on the departing day.

Transported with anger, Sir Paget snatched the letter from her hand, and,

adjusting his gold *pince-nez* on his nose, focussed the lines and glared at them; and after he had read he tossed it from him.

'An insult, by Jove, Lady Puddicombe —a deliberate insult!'

'Sir Paget,' began Eveline, but paused; she knew not what to urge or say, though she knew but too well all the bequest implied.

'Who wants his dirty acres of Highland bog and rock? Not I—the presumptuous fellow!'

'Presumptuous!' repeated Eveline, with a bitter smile, as she thought of the antecedents of the baronet of Slough-cum-Sloggit. 'Cameron's descent is as old as the hills; his ancestors have hunted with James V., and in battle were the comrades of Montrose and Dundee.'

'What the devil is all this to me—or to

you, for the matter of that?' snarled Sir Paget, puffing out his chest. 'I am at liberty to reject this bequest on my own part.'

'But not on mine,' replied Eveline, quietly yet firmly.

'The deuce—you will accept it?'

'Why should not I—if I do injustice to none?'

'And degrade yourself in the eyes of the world!'

'How, Sir Paget?'

'What was this man to you? every man will naturally inquire.'

'None can know that he was ever even a friend to me,' said Eveline, with difficulty restraining her tears.

'It must be rejected, I say!'

'But the estate is not left to you, Sir Paget.'

'Estate!' said he, scornfully. 'A few

acres of bog and heather, and a mansion that probably keeps out neither wind nor weather.'

So no action was taken in the matter for a time, and the letter of Messrs. Horning and Tailzie, W.S., remained unanswered, much to the surprise of these gentlemen (who deemed themselves persons of no small importance), and was to remain so until the return from cub-hunting at Hurdell Hall.

Sir Paget was sorely ruffled by this new event, and felt himself at liberty to sneer vulgarly at Eveline's former lover, and at her shattered fidelity to any vows she made by her marriage with himself; whereas the poor girl had never made one.

She felt that—as a wedded wife—she must stand alone in her secret grief, and byond the pale of human succour or sym-

pathy, and the sweet words of 'Auld Robin Gray' occurred to her:

'I daurna think o' Jamie, for that wad be a sin.'

Times there were when she dreamt of Evan vividly, and that he was with her again. 'Why should it be a miracle that the dead come back?' asks an author; 'the wonder is that they do not. How can one go away who loves you and never return, nor speak, nor send any message —that is the miracle; not that the heavens should bend down and the gates of Paradise roll back and those who have left us return.' At such times he seemed near to her, and his voice was in her ears—more near to her than he had ever been. He loved her, but he was gone—gone, and the grey day was stealing slowly in!

Olive, she thought, she must see Olive; doubtless Allan must have written home to her, and his letters might contain some

details of this catastrophe that she would learn nowhere else, so she contrived a visit to Puddicombe Villa at Southsea on their way to Hurdell Hall. But she gained nothing by this.

Lady Aberfeldie had heard of the late event in Egypt, and saw in a moment how it had affected her daughter.

'She is a very sensitive girl, Sir Paget,' said she, deprecatingly, in reply to a somewhat stinging remark of his; 'and thus you see the sudden death of this young man, so recently our guest at Dundargue, and so long her brother's tried friend and comrade, and one to whose courage that brother and all of us owe so much, has—not unnaturally, I think—greatly shocked her.'

'Shocked her rather too much, apparently,' jerked out Sir Paget, with a grimace. 'Who could have supposed that so brief

an acquaintance—shall we call it an acquaintance?—could have produced an impression so deep.'

Lady Aberfeldie bridled up a little and crested her handsome head; for, like Sir Paget, she had her own thoughts on the subject.

'Well, he is gone now,' said she, after a pause.

'And a devilish good thing, too,' added Sir Paget, roughly.

She made no rejoinder, conceiving that the less that was said on the matter the better.

Eveline found Olive in a very crushed state.

Allan had never written to her, and, as yet, even his mother's letter of explanation had not been replied to. Perhaps he did not believe in it. He had left her abruptly and passionately and with a sore heart.

Many such hearts are caught by others on the rebound, for the void in them is more easily filled up, and often requires to be so.

'Oh, heaven,' she thought, 'if such should be the case with Allan—not in Egypt, for that was very unlikely, but at Gibraltar or Malta, where English ladies were to be met with.'

'Even if married, I fear you would never win the Dunmow Flitch,' Lady Aberfeldie had said to her angrily on one occasion.

'My unfortunate money has been the cause of all this,' replied Olive. 'It excited the cunning and cupidity of that unfortunate man, Holcroft, and has led to the saddest misconceptions and misconstructions from the first between dear Allan and myself,' she added, in tears.

'Most true.'

Olive knew that the doubtful position in which she had been placed with reference

to Allan had, as she thought, been fully explained away in writing by his mother, and his father too; but from Allan there came no letter to herself.

What did his silence mean? Even anger were better than nothing.

'My unfortunate money,' she repeated: 'my golden chains have proved a curse to us both. He has ceased to love me now, and, loving him as I do, what can my life be to me? And how shall I live on through all the months and years of it without him? What if we never meet again! He may fall in this war as his friend Cameron fell —oh, my love—not you—not you—not *that.*'

And the luckless girl wept bitterly.

CHAPTER VI.

A SKIRMISH IN THE DESERT.

Buried in the sand!

Yes—it was all true—too true; the gay, handsome, and usually light-hearted Laird of Stratherroch, one of the most popular fellows in the Black Watch—he who had won the V.C. in battle with his good claymore—he whom Eveline had known in the heyday of his life, when the world seemed so fresh and fair to both, whom she had last seen as a despairing and broken-hearted lover, was gone—struck down by a bullet of some nameless Egyptian savage,

buried in the desert, and she would never see him more, though the poignancy of his farewell would haunt her for many a day.

And thus it all came to pass.

A band of Bedouins had been hovering in the vicinity of Matarieh, plundering and looting. These Allan, after a consultation with Cameron, resolved to make a demonstration against, and with Farquharson, his sergeant, and thirty picked men, in light marching order, they quitted the village, and about an hour before sunrise took their way towards the desert.

The light of the coming day shone along the latter, a sandy waste, overlooked by Jebel Mokattam, a chain of rocks abrupt and barren that extends from Cairo to the cataracts. They are generally flat, with beetling summits, while below, on the face which fronts the Nile, they are furrowed as if water-worn by the rain of ages.

On the other flank, towards Jebel Dimeshk, rises a ridge of sand-hills that follows in the same direction at an equal distance, all the windings and sinuosities of that which lines the eastern bank.

Between lay the winding line of the disused railway. In front the horizon seemed foggy or dusty, and along the desert the sun shone for a time, as he rose, like a red ball, shorn of his rays.

In rear the party left behind the village of Matarieh, with the clumps of palm-trees, beyond which, with the tall obelisk and the ruins of several sphinxes, rose the great mounds of earth that mark the site of Heliopolis, 'the City of the Sun,' the inhabitants of which worshipped a bull called Mnevis, with the same ceremonies as the Apis of Memphis, and where Apollo had an oracle.

Over the same ground where in 1800 a

battle was fought between the French and Turks, in which the latter were defeated with the loss of eight thousand men and all their cannon and baggage, Allan's little band marched merrily on towards the desert in hope to 'polish off' a few of the Bedouins before returning to quarters.

They were well supplied with ammunition; each man had a day's rations in his haversack, and his water-bottle filled with the red sandy fluid of the Nile. In Exodus we are told that the Egyptians loathed to drink the waters of that river, and, as Cameron said, 'the men of the Black Watch were much of the same mind.'

Now, in making a reconnaissance, Allan Graham was a trained soldier enough to know that cover from view is important, as it enables troops, whatever their strength, to form for action; thus he

hoped to utilise the railway bank, or, if not that, some of the sandy undulations around it.

As the first object in reconnoitring is to get observation, with his sergeant, who was a sharp fellow, he went at some distance in front of his men, field-glass in hand, and looked sharply about him.

He continued to move in a north-easterly direction for nearly ten miles till mid-day, but saw nothing of Bedouins, and then, halting amid a clump of palms, threw out some sentinels towards the front, piled arms, and the Highlanders in their kilts and red serges threw themselves on the grass and prepared to make a meal of what they had brought with them, washed down by Nile water.

There he remained till noon was long past, and he began to think of falling back on Matarieh.

Even under the shadow of the palms they were tormented by gnats and sand-flies.

'We are in the land of the "Arabian Nights"—the land of giants, fairies, and genii, and all that sort of thing,' said Cameron, as he lit a cigar; 'but, if a little picturesque, Allan, the discomforts are abominably real.'

'Surely water is lying yonder, sir,' said Sergeant Farquharson, 'and we might get our water-bottles filled.'

All looked eagerly in the direction indicated, towards the base of the Jebel Dimeshk range. The sun was clear, bright, and powerful now. Amid the silent waste of sand a long, narrow lake seemed at no great distance.

'If water it is,' exclaimed Cameron, 'there are certainly men moving through it.'

'The Bedouins, by Jove!' cried Allan. 'Down, down,' he shouted to his sentinels, 'lie down, under cover if you can.'

They lay down flat, and Allan, adopting the same position, turned his field-glass towards the *mirage*, for such it was—that beautiful optical illusion produced by the sun's rays reflected from the heated sand, and which raises before the eye of the thirsty wayfarer the tantalising but perfect representation of distant lakes or pleasing sheets of water.

About eighty Bedouin horse were moving slowly from the direction of the Jebel Dimeskh range towards the line of the railway. Whatever their object was, from a description given to Allan, he was certain they were those of whom he was in search, and that their object was to turn up in the vicinity of Matarieh after sunset, intent on plunder, as everywhere these

lawless sons of the desert were taking advantage of the confusion of affairs in Egypt.

Some were armed with long muskets of antique form, but by far the greater number had Remington rifles—flung away by Arabi's fugitive soldiers—slung over their backs, or at their saddles, weapons that had superseded the javelin, the bow, and in many instances the spear. They were clad in barracans of dark brown wool, with floating burnouses, many of them spotlessly white; and as they seemed to be making slowly, for shelter doubtless, towards the clump of palms occupied by Allan's party, which was yet beyond their range of vision, he drew the whole off and took post behind the bank of the abandoned railway, a movement which was fortunately quite unseen by the foe.

Formation against cavalry would be use-

less, as these wild horsemen have no idea of tactics; and, to deceive them as to his force, Allan formed his men in extended order, three paces apart, each man lying on his face, close under the line of the embankment.

Allan knew from experience how fire from a steep slope becomes plunging; thus he congratulated himself that the slope for his musketry was one that was parallel to the trajectory of the rifles.

By a single word he could, if necessary, form his men in a rallying square on the crest of the line. As the Bedouins came riding forward, in a disorderly group, at an easy, ambling pace, Allan, by means of his field-glass, was certain that in their leader he recognised the Arab, Zeid-el-Ourdeh, whom he had succoured after his wounds at Kassassin, and sent to the hospital at Ismailia.

He was wearing the same robes with wide sleeves, and the richly embroidered girdle he wore when found near the camp.

'Steady and still, men,' cried Allan, 'and we'll play old gooseberry with these beggars, as we have done everywhere else.'

They were about five hundred paces distant, a range for which the rifles were sighted, when suddenly a Bedouin uttered a shrill cry of alarm, and all began to unsling their firearms. His eye had detected a clay-coloured helmet with its red hackle on the left side.

Ere they could fire a shot, the Highlanders from their cover poured in a deadly fire, and more than twenty men and horses went down in confused heaps; the latter, in the agony of their wounds and terror, kicking and lashing wildly out with their hoofs, raising clouds of sand,

while braining the skulls and breaking the limbs of the fallen riders, whether dead or wounded; then shrieks and groans, cries and curses loaded the air, as all who were untouched or able to keep their saddles, after firing, half at random, a ragged volley, wheeled round their light chargers and went off with the speed of the wind.

'Cease firing!' cried Allan Graham; 'we have taught these fellows a lesson severe enough for the day, and I don't think they will venture near Matarieh again.'

In that, however, he was mistaken, as he afterwards found to his cost.

'And now,' he added, as he crossed the line of railway, sword in hand, 'to give water to the wounded, succour any we can, smash all their weapons, and leave them to fate or their returning friends.'

He, with most of his party, approached

the place where the victims of the fusilade lay, and, so far as blood, wounds, and agony went, they presented a very dreadful scene, and yet a trifling one when compared with that witnessed so lately in the trenches of Tel-el-Kebir.

Many were shot outright; others, severely wounded, lay wallowing and choking in their blood, and they regarded the victors with a firm, scowling, and defiant expression in their long, thin, tawny faces, and black, bright, glittering eyes, that made them look, as Allan said, like dying eagles.

But, before anything could be done for the survivors, the fatal episode of the day took place.

A little way apart from the group of death and agony, lay a Bedouin, who, though untouched, was partly under his horse, from which he freed himself, and

then Cameron advanced to take him prisoner. He was an athletic and gigantic fellow, all bone and sinew, lithe as a serpent, and active as the antelope of his native deserts.

Drawing a long pistol from his girdle, he levelled it at Cameron, but it snapped, on which he flung it furiously at the head of the latter, who ducked, and escaped it.

Several Highlanders now rushed forward, as he had drawn a large and heavy Damascus sabre, but they paused with their hands on their locks when Cameron cried,

'Stand back, my lads, and leave him to me!' And in a moment both their blades were flashing in the setting sun, for Cameron fell upon him claymore in hand.

'May your head be covered by a whirlwind of fire!' hissed the Bedouin in Arabic,

through his clenched teeth, while he hewed away without the least intention of surrendering. The hood of his red and white striped burnous had fallen back, and his whole head and face, with flashing eyes and gleaming teeth, were displayed to view.

Cameron was a skilful swordsman, but so was the Bedouin, who was his superior in height and muscular power. Their blades struck red sparks from each other. Cameron forgot to draw his long dirk; but he had 'Sir Garnet's' ugly jack-knife in his left hand, for parrying purposes. How the combat would have terminated, it is difficult to say, but a vile Bedouin, who lay wounded close by, armed with a long, straight sword, with the last effort of expiring nature, writhed himself up from the sand, ran poor Cameron through the body from behind, and fell back dead.

With a hollow groan, Cameron fell

backward across him, and was about to receive a finishing stroke from his antagonist, when the latter was shot through the head by Sergeant Farquharson.

This catastrophe rather cooled Allan's humane ideas of succouring the wounded. Very few of the Highlanders had been touched, and these but slightly. However, it seemed as if Cameron was dying. He was speechless, and his mouth at times was filled with blood. It was impossible then to ascertain the exact nature of his wounds, or what part of the body was injured. Allan, full of tenderness, anxiety, and the deepest commiseration, formed a pad of his handkerchief, and, using his sash as a bandage, endeavoured, so far as in him lay, to stop the bleeding, while a litter was improvised by a couple of rifles, with a blanket stretched over them; and the party began to fall back

on Matarieh, but often had to halt, for the agony of Cameron was great, and Allan began to despair of getting him conveyed in life to Matarieh, which, as we have said, was nearly ten miles distant, while, to enhance their difficulties, a troop of nearly a hundred Bedouins were visible, pouring down a rocky gorge of the Jebel Mokattam range; so nothing was left to Allan but to continue his retreat, which they seemed slow or disinclined to follow up.

Yet their presence was fraught with danger, especially after the sun, with its usual rapidity in these regions, went down like a red, fiery ball, and the lurid haze exhaled from the flat desert on which the darkness fell.

The stars were coming out in the blue zenith; the dew was already beginning to fall; long and dark shadows lay across the

plain, but the line of the railway was a sure guide back to Matarieh and the vicinity of Heliopolis.

Every step of his bearers elicited a moan of pain from Cameron, and these went to the heart of his friend as if they had been the utterances of a brother, while now and then the sufferer muttered his thanks to the soldiers for their care and kindness, and his regret for the trouble he gave them after a day of toil, and his fears that he was retarding their retreat and thereby involving them in danger. Of his own pain or peril he never uttered a word.

Constellations new to him and his comrades were in the sky now—a vast blue dome that stretched far, far away, all bright with glorious stars.

At last it was absolutely necessary to halt for a time, for all thought the sufferer was dying, and the Highlanders said that

if the Bedouins came on again they would form square round him; and soon it became too evident that Evan Cameron was lying 'on the bleak neutral ground between life and death.'

Accustomed though they were to suffering and slaughter, the Highlanders stood around him leaning on their muskets, full of commiseration, and looking attentively at the pale face of the dying officer and back to the desert where they had last seen the enemy hovering; and more than one wished that the Bedouins would only come on again.

'Has no man among us here any water?' asked Allan, for by this time the tin bottles of the detachment were empty.

A man who was in the act of taking the stopper out of his, paused instantly.

'Captain Graham, here is mine,' said he; 'there are only a drop or two left, but

if it was my blood I'd give it for Evan Cameron,' he added, emphatically, with that familiarity which is peculiar to the Highlander, and has no rudeness in it.

'Donald, thank you,' said Allan.

'My mother bides nigh the braes of Stratherroch, and I am not likely to forget that to-night,' said the soldier, with a break in his voice.

Raising Cameron's head gently, Allan put Donald's water-bottle to his lips, and he drank thirstily of the fetid and odious water it contained, 'the Nile soup,' as our men called it.

Refreshed even by it for a few minutes, Evan Cameron spoke to Allan, but in whispers, and, as they seemed to be meant for the ear of the latter alone, the soldiers with one accord drew back a little way.

'I knew from the first that I should

never pull through—nor do I wish to do so, Allan,' said he, speaking at long intervals and with a husky effort.

'We have faced death together in many ways, but I wish your case had been mine, Evan, even if it is to be a fatal one.'

'Don't say that, Allan, dear fellow,' replied Evan, with that strange, far-off expression of eye which belongs alone to a fast-ebbing life—an expression which Allan could see even in the starlight as he stooped close over the sufferer, 'my sight is failing me, yet I can in fancy see Eveline—oh! so distinctly, Allan—and I seem to hear her voice—you don't mind me saying this *now*, lying, as I am here, face to face with God—the voice that seemed to whisper to my heart.'

Allan could only press the clammy hand that never again would grasp the broad

claymore. Evan spoke again, but still more brokenly,

'I am not jealous now of my married rival; I only sorrow for the lost future of Eveline; married to an old man whom she may respect but never love, and with whom she cannot have a sympathy in common.'

'You are talking too much, Evan.'

'And thinking of her rather than my prayers. When I am lying here in my long and peaceful sleep, far from my father's grave in bonnie Stratherroch, she will live all the years of a young life, and, in the time to come, will—of course, forget me.'

His voice was almost gone now, yet his eyes dilated when Allan said, with sorrowful emphasis,

'Evan, she will never forget you.'

'Nearer me—come nearer, Allan; I—I want you to tell her—tell her——'

What he was to tell Allan never heard, as the voice of Cameron ceased; a change, perceptible in the clear starlight, was passing over his face; a dew was gathering on his forehead, and dark shadows under his eyes.

'He's gone, sir,' said Sergeant Farquharson, lifting his helmet for a moment in mute reverence. 'Well, Captain Graham, the golden gates have never closed upon a better officer or a braver man! Poor Evan Cameron,' he added, stooping over the body and looking at it earnestly.

Allan cast a long and sad glance at it too; then he laid a hand on the heart; it might be only syncope—no, it did not seem to be that.

The profile of his face in its stillness looked like a classic cameo cut in high relief. His fair, almost golden, hair, clipped close with military precision, re-

tained still its crispy ripple. The brown moustache shading the short upper lip had been somewhat untrimmed of late; but he looked so life-like that Allan almost shuddered as he spread the blanket over him and covered him up—for he felt that in that wretched substitute for a shroud lay one whom he knew his sister—married albeit as she was to another—loved better than life!

It was hard to think of so young and gallant a life being cut short thus by the inexorable scissors of Fate; but he was gone to the 'Land of the leal,' where there can be no sorrow nor thought of sordid things.

'We cannot leave him lying here thus; neither can we carry him off; while there is a chance of these Bedouin devils coming on again. Besides, there are always jackals about,' said Allan, as he took possession of

Evan's claymore, dirk, and ring. 'Scoop a hole—a temporary grave in the sand—and cover him up, till we can return by daylight, and bring him into quarters for proper interment.'

The soldiers, with their hands, bayonets, and rifle-butts, hollowed a trench some three feet deep, and therein, rolled in a blanket, they reverently deposited the yet warm form of Cameron, and covered it up with sand.

Allan maintained a grim silence, and, though his heart was full of genuine grief, the remarks of his soldiers pleased him.

'Those who have lived with us and died as he has done will never be forgotten in the regiment, sir,' said Sergeant Farquharson.

'Mourn for the mourner, I have heard my mother say in Gaelic, and not for the dead, as they are at rest and we in tears,'

said Donald, as he hooked-on his water-bottle.

'He has none to mourn for him now but one, and she is far away,' remarked Allan, with a swelling in his throat. 'And now fall in, lads.'

The Highlanders marched on their way back to Matarieh in silence, impressed by the recent episode; for, if gallant and reckless fellows in battle, they were thoughtful and full of sorrow for the brave young officer they had lost.

A shot or two, fired apparently at random in the distance, sparkling out redly amid the obscurity, showed that the Bedouins were following them up, and must have passed over the very place where Cameron lay.

The silence of the starry night was upon the world then—upon the ridgy summits of Jebel Mokattam, and dark-

ness now enfolded the desert where Evan Cameron lay in such awful loneliness, without even the grim companionship of the dead—the last Cameron of the old fighting line of Stratherroch.

Two days after, with an ambulance waggon, Sergeant Farquharson, and some of his men, Allan went along the line of the old railway from Matarieh to the place where they had left the body—a place marked in their memory by the presence of two large stones and some shrubs near the embankment—but of these they could find no trace, though they searched for hours, believing they might have passed them or miscalculated the distance.

Nothing was to be seen about the real or supposed spot but sand, smooth and drifted sand everywhere. Thus Allan could but come to the sorrowful conclusion that some species of sand-storm must

have swept from the desert south-eastward between the mountain ranges, and buried every trace of the hastily-made grave.

CHAPTER VII.

HURDELL HALL.

'WELCOME to Hurdell Hall! My sister Lucretia—Lady Puddicombe and Sir Paget, Lucretia—Sir Paget, our mutual friend Poole, you know.'

Thus did Sir Harry Hurdell introduce Eveline and Sir Paget, with much *empressement* and effusiveness, to his home in Hampshire, when the carriage duly deposited them, with Mademoiselle Clairette, Sir Paget's valet, and 'no end' of trunks and boxes in a van, at the *porte cochère*.

Situated in the northern district of the

shire, where the woods are chiefly hazel, birch, alder, and willow, where flocks of deer scour the coppice, Hurdell Hall is a fine example of the old Tudor architecture, and, as Eveline saw it for the first time with the rays of the evening sun casting dashes of golden light upon its ogee gables, mullioned bay-windows, its long gravelled approach, and stately terrace, she thought what a charming picture it would make, with its background of oaks, which in Hampshire seldom rise into lofty stems, but have branches that are usually twisted into picturesque outlines.

Below the terrace lay a kind of pool, in which a couple of swans were floating lazily, each with one leg tucked up under a wing, and where the snow-white water-lilies gleamed in the sunshine.

Nor was the inside of the Hall—which was to be associated with events never

to be forgotten by Eveline—any way inferior to the outside. There were stately apartments furnished with every modern luxury in the way of upholstery, and others where the furniture spoke of an old, old past, and of generations of Hurdells who had long since been gathered together in the old family vault; panelled corridors adorned with busts of Roman emperors and gods; stuffed tropical birds and horns of gigantic size; cabinets, swords, daggers, helmets, and armour; and where portraits were hung of, knights and dames in brilliant colours; one of Sir Harry, who accompanied the Royal Bluebeard to the field of cloth of gold; another who had been the comrade of Sir Horace of Tilbury in many a field in Flanders; and the Hurdells of later times in powdered wigs, toupees, and long stomachers.

There was also a charming little Gothic

private chapel, which had now a luxurious divan around it, as the present Sir Harry, not being much addicted to devotions, had turned it into a billiard-room, and a most commodious and excellent one it was, as the niches were tall enough to hold cues and the basin of the font was admirably calculated to hold the balls.

Sir Harry was rather handsome, but *blasé* in aspect and bearing; there was an indolent and rather lascivious expression in his eyes, the light colour of which it is difficult to define; he had a transparent nostril and short upper lip, with long tawny moustache, and a face which, though difficult to say why, was not a pleasing one.

His sister Lucretia, his senior by several years, was somewhat his counterpart in appearance, and, nearer her fortieth than her thirtieth year, was still very hand-

some, but handsome in a faded way; and she received the young wife of old Sir Paget with considerable effusiveness, kissing her on both cheeks *à la Française;* though Eveline, fair, soft, and timid even in friendship, felt oppressed rather than soothed or pleased by the society of this somewhat *blasé* and disappointed woman of the world, with her cold, steely eyes, ashy-tinted hair, thin lips, and caressing manner; and Eveline soon discovered she was vain, shallow, selfish, and not unaddicted to white lies when they suited her purpose.

Perhaps the creature she cared most for in this world, after herself and her brother, was a little, wheezy 'King Charles,' with a blue ribbon and silver bell adorning its neck.

While the gentlemen were smoking and idling in the billiard-room—the same place

where Philip of Spain, *en route* from Southampton to marry Mary, had made his devotions—she entertained Eveline with afternoon tea in a charming little room dark with oak-panelling, with rare old oak furniture, and hangings of ancient tapestry that testified to the industry of white-handed Hurdells in generations past.

Something of *ennui*, at least, in the young face of her new acquaintance did not fail to catch the attention of the sharp Lucretia, who knew from the first that Eveline's marriage had been an ill-assorted one; yet, she said, after a pause,

'You long to join the gentlemen, I think; they are not far off—only at the end of the corridor.'

'Pardon me, I am more pleased to be with you.'

'Thanks, dear; but I fear that you and Sir Paget are a pair of regular love-birds,

and must go through a systematic amount of billing and cooing every day.'

Eveline smiled faintly, but made no response. Did Miss Hurdell mean this as a sneer? she thought; it seemed so.

'Dear Sir Paget!' said Miss Hurdell again, a little irrelevantly. 'I thought love-matches were out of fashion now.'

'She *is* mocking me,' thought Eveline, yet the rather aristocratic face of Lucretia was as inscrutable as her manner was suave to sweetness.

'All who know Sir Paget respect him —he is a thoroughly good man,' said Eveline, feeling the necessity of saying something.

'"Women always like wicked fellows," says Lefanu, in one of his novels. It is contrast; but it has been my experience that they do.'

'No right-minded woman would endorse

this opinion of our sex, I am assured.'

Miss Hurdell laughed at Eveline's gravity, and refilled their cups of dragon-blue china.

'I always hated the idea of being married,' said she.

'Why?' asked Eveline.

'Because it would make life—I thought—so tame.'

'How odd!'

'Ah, no doubt you think so. I didn't care about being engaged and all that sort of thing; but no, I never would have married.'

Sooth to say, she had never had an offer, or been engaged, in her life.

'It is so nice to be a *fiancée*—the object of daily attention.'

'Then you must have been engaged to know all this, Miss Hurdell.'

'Like yourself, dear, of course—but call

me Lucretia. A girl has more freedom when engaged than before it; though the envy of her female friends, she can be more natural with her gentlemen friends, and may say many a merry and rantipole thing she dared not have said before. Goldsmith was right when he makes Dr. Primrose declare that courtship is generally a happier state than marriage. To me it seems to turn the butterfly into a caterpillar.'

Eveline knew what to think of these novel views, but she sighed as she thought of what her own existence was now.

'To me,' resumed the fair Lucretia, 'it always seemed as if, when the wedding-ring was slipped on my slender finger, I should have nothing left to live for; that my existence would belong wholly to another person.'

Eveline set down her tea-cup and looked

at the speaker with something of mute wonder. In society she had met with many strange persons, but none who had such odd views as the mature chatelaine of Hurdell Hall.

'But you would have your husband to live for,' she urged gently, but certainly not thinking of her *own*.

'A very commonplace style of living, I should think.'

'Not if one marries for love,' said Eveline softly.

'As you married' (old was on her lips) 'as you married dear Sir Paget.'

Eveline felt her colour rise, yet she only said, 'But—but to marry with any doubt in one's heart would be deception.'

'Well,' said Miss Hurdell, raising her eyebrows, 'if a woman may not deceive her own husband whom has she a right to deceive?'

This was a new view ef the matter to poor Eveline, who began to have rather a horror of her hostess.

'There goes the dressing-bell, dear—we dine at eight,' said Lucretia, rising; 'let me conduct you to your room.'

Once there, Eveline was free to give full vent to her own thoughts. She would never see that lonely grave in the desert where Evan Cameron lay; but to her mind it was sacred, as of old was the place whereon the angel of the Lord alighted.

'Oh for some news—news of how it all came about! If Allan would only write to me—or to Olive; he surely will tell her. This is more than I can bear!' and interlacing her slender white fingers—a way she had contracted now when alone—she pressed them with palms outward, against her throbbing forehead, as if she meant to break them.

Alas! she was to learn too soon tidings of another dire calamity, and *why* Allan was unable to write to any one.

There was no trace of all this deep emotion in her soft face when she descended to the drawing-room, with a velvet dress of that blue which so suited her pale complexion, cut square at the neck, and having elbow sleeves with lace, and rich mosaics set in gold clasping her white neck, and exquisitely rounded arms that were so white and taper.

There could be no two opinions about her rare beauty, and Sir Harry Hurdell and his fast friend—fast in more ways than one—both acknowledged it at a glance, as their sharp and critical eyes took in every detail of her witching face, her rounded girlish cheek, her sweetly curved mouth, with its short upper lip, her nose and delicate nostrils.

Sir Harry Hurdell was very sceptical of the purity of all women. He would not have believed in that of his own mother had she been alive; so he was perhaps to be pardoned for deeming that Lady Puddicombe 'was just like the rest,' whatever that might mean.

He was intensely gratified and glad that the girl was so young and lovely, and that her husband was so old and so commonplace: thus he resolved, in his own phraseology, 'to enter stakes for the filly—to make his innings if he could, or the devil was in it!'

CHAPTER VIII.

SIR HARRY.

THERE was an air of lassitude, of settled melancholy, and at times of abstraction, apparent about Eveline, which she could not always successfully conceal, that did not fail to impress and surprise the baronet of Hurdell Hall and his sister, and the latter observed her narrowly when they were together in the drawing-room.

'I have heard that you sing beautifully, Lady Puddicombe,' said she, opening the piano.

'I used to sing—a little,' replied Eveline.

'Used to sing! Why drop so charming an accomplishment?'

'I have had thoughts of late that make me sad.'

'We must cure you of all that. What style of music do you love most?'

'I love all music that is beautiful.'

'And songs?'

'That are melancholy.'

'Then sing me some favourite thing before the gentlemen join us—there is a dear, do.'

Thus urged, and fearing to appear ungracious, Eveline seated herself before the instrument—a grand and very stately one it was, and began to sing in a voice that became tender, passionate, and beautiful, touching even the somewhat arid heart of her listener—by two of the verses especially:—

'Perchance, if we had never met,
I had been spared this mad regret,
This endless striving to forget,
For ever and for ever!

. . . . . .

Ah me, I cannot bear the pain,
Of never seeing thee again,
I cling to thee with might and main,
For ever and for ever!'

She felt as if she were singing to Evan, who, perhaps, in spirit was hovering near her; for Eveline was beginning at times to have strange fancies now. There were tears in her voice as she sang, and there were tears in her eyes too; but she paused abruptly as the gentlemen came in from the dining-room, and the eyes of Sir Paget were fixed inquiringly and reprovingly upon her. Her voice seemed to pass away, nor could any entreaties of Sir Harry and his sister make her conclude the song—a well-known one.

'Hah—thereby hangs a tale!' thought

the fair Lucretia, as Sir Harry conducted Eveline back to her chair, and took a seat by her side.

No idle or constitutionally dissipated man can withstand the temptation of attempting to fascinate a pretty woman, and, if possible, of eclipsing another man, and to eclipse one like old Sir Paget would seem no very difficult task; so, while talking quietly with Eveline on the last play, the last news, or any current subject, Sir Harry was thinking to himself, while admiring the contour of her head, her rich brown hair, long eyelashes, and lovely little hands,

'By Jove, if old Pudd would only go off the hooks, anyhow! She can't care a straw for him, don't you know, with his old bald pate that he is always jerking forward like a hen when she has laid an egg. She was in love with some fellow

who has gone to Egypt—so Holcroft told me—been engaged to him perhaps; but her mother was set upon her marrying old Pudd's coin, and among them all they talked her into it, no doubt. Poor little girl, I must try to console her.'

Lucretia Hurdell, who at times affected girlish airs, now brought that piece of drawing-room foolery, her 'Confession Book,' upon the *tapis*.

'You must positively write me yours, dear Lady Puddicombe,' said she.

'Or permit me to write there for you,' suggested Sir Harry. 'Now to begin—"Were you ever in love?"'

'The idea of asking a married woman that,' exclaimed Miss Hurdell.

'If so, how often?' continued her brother.

'I would say "never," according to the novelist's idea of it,' replied Eveline, with an air of annoyance.

'Don't know what that idea is,' said Sir Henry, eyeing her askance and admiringly.

'I should rather say I have been in love, but never mean to be so again.'

Eveline shivered as she said this, for while conversing apparently with Mr. Pyke Poole the cold eyes of Sir Paget were upon her again.

She felt the rashness of her speech. It was offensive to him, and was not without some point in the mind of Sir Harry.

The cub-hunting was not to begin for a few days yet, and meanwhile the master of the house followed her about pretty persistently, so that she had, ere long, a restless feeling about it. When departing on a riding-party he anticipated Sir Paget by swinging her into the saddle, adjusting her skirts and reins, leaving Pike Poole to do that office for Miss Hurdell, to whom, in return for pleasant quarters, he usually

devoted himself, while she, with all her alleged indifference to matrimony, was not indisposed to receive his attentions.

There was something in the occasional gaze of Sir Harry that puzzled the innocent Eveline and made her feel restless under it, especially when he hung over her at the piano, as he constantly did; and now she played more than she cared for, to avoid conversation and have freedom to indulge in her own sad thoughts.

'Surely you must be tired of standing there so long, Sir Harry,' she said once, with surprise.

'Tired of what—listening to you or gazing on you?' he replied, lowering his voice for her ear alone; 'either were impossible.'

If he had been addressing a barmaid he could scarcely have made a more pointed remark; but so full was Eveline of

thoughts too deep for words—thoughts of the untimely fate of one who loved her so dearly—to whose fate or past existence she dared not refer, and for whom she dared not wear even a black ribbon—that she did not perceive the admiration she was exciting in the breast of Sir Harry and in the quiet purity of her own heart that such sentiments as his could exist, never occurred to her.

He ventured on one occasion to say something very pointed about the beauty of her hands as she idled over the piano keys.

'As there are other ladies in the room, I cannot compliment you on your discrimination, Sir Harry,' she replied, coldly. 'But what do you mean by saying such things to me?' she added.

She began at last to perceive that there was a *meaning* in his voice. She felt of-

fended, and wished the cub-hunting would begin, that the visit of herself and Sir Paget to Hurdell Hall might come the sooner to an end.

'If I could only achieve a good long and quiet walk and talk with her,' grumbled Sir Harry to himself; 'but in this cursed place we are always interrupted —can't attempt to make my innings or be with her alone. Lucretia, Poole, or some one else always turns up, and she—herself—never gives a fellow the chance wanted.'

Though innately wicked in heart and rejoicing that the poor girl had made —or been compelled by others to make —an ill-assorted marriage, something of pity for her began to mingle with his nefarious ideas and hopes, and that pity was as much akin to love as his *blasé* soul could feel.

'It is a regular case of Beauty and the Beast, this marriage of old Pudd's,' thought he.

Finding her promenading on the terrace alone one evening overlooking the pool where the swans swam among the snow-white water-lilies, he hastened to join her.

'I don't think you have seen our conservatories,' he said. 'Permit me to show you them.'

'Thanks, I do so love flowers.'

They entered the long glazed avenues of potted plants and rich exotics, where rustic sofas with luxurious cushions were placed under the feathery foliage of acacias, and after idling a little, admiring flowers that were of great beauty and the perfection of professional gardening, Sir Harry brought her a tiny bouquet of beautiful and sweetly-scented violets,

which, thoughtlessly, she placed in the bosom of her dress.

His eyes gleamed as he saw her do this. He said,

'So charmed to see the place assigned to my gift.'

'Why?'

'When I know what the flower imports in the language of flowers.'

'What does the violet import?' asked Eveline, shortly.

'Is it possible you do not know?'

'I do not.'

'It means eternal love and constancy.'

'Indeed,' responded Eveline, with a tone of indifference. She felt inclined to detach the bouquet from her dress, and restore it to the giver or deposit it on one of the iron shelves, but as that might have implied that she understood too much, she

simply quitted the conservatory and went once more upon the terrace.

'The air is chilly here after the hot atmosphere of the conservatories,' said Sir Harry, greatly encouraged by the acceptance of his flowers; 'and that Shetland shawl is only an apology for a wrap over your head, though you look charming in it—permit me,' he added, as he drew it closer round her.

Their eyes met as he did so, and she read an expression in his downward gaze that made her pale cheek crimson, and then grow pale again; and to avoid anything more she re-entered the house.

'It is because I am married to an old man that he dares to treat me thus, and so thinks little of me,' she began to reflect—'an old man whose eyes are ever full of angry reproach about poor Evan, who never wronged him, even in thought. Oh,

how hateful, how loathsome my life is! If luxurious it is duplicity, all!'

She actually began to think she would go away somewhere—where her father and husband would never find her—change her name and be a governess or something of that kind. The idea of suicide or anything so dreadful, in all her sorrow, bitterness, and humiliation of spirit, never occurred to her for a moment. She only hoped that God would direct her, pardon her for these rebellious feelings against fate, and let her live her own way and then die.

Why did she not run away before her absurd marriage? she thought now, and before her young life was so utterly wrecked by it? But she forgot how, under the motherly care and authority of Lady Aberfeldie, she had always been in a certain constraint and awe, and how her

own sudden jealousy of Evan Cameron had helped to bring that catastrophe about.

But this growing admiration on the part of Sir Harry Hurdell was a new experience in life to her.

She was justly incensed by it, and knew that he was presuming upon her youth, her husband's age, and the too apparent aspect of an ill-assorted marriage. Their visit must be cut short at all risks; but what excuse was she to make to Sir Paget; for, with her knowledge of his jealousy of one who was dead, how was she to enlighten him on the subject of Sir Harry, whose manner proved to her somewhat obnoxious.

The truth was that he was so much in the use and wont of having 'sherry-glass flirtations' at railway buffets, and so forth, that he was quite incapable of showing his admiration or regard in a subtle or pleas-

ing, respectful or cavalier way, and even his own grooms might have been better hands at it than he, the lord of that grand old ancestral home.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CUB-HUNTING.

The gong for breakfast sounded betimes at Hurdell Hall on the morning of the first day's cub-hunting, as an early hour is always most favourable for scent, and, as several guests were invited, an ample meal was spread in the great dining-room, the several bay windows of which overlooked the terrace and stately chase that spread far away beyond it.

Sir Harry and his sister were the first who appeared, and the latter looked round for the morning papers, but could see none.

Now, though the 'fair Lucretia,' as her friends frequently called her, cared nothing about the war in Egypt, she liked to read about the movements of 'the upper ten thousand'—their births, marriages, deaths, and so forth—to all of which she addressed herself first, as a City man does to the money article.

'Where are the papers, Harry?' she asked.

'I have ordered the butler to take them all away,' said he.

'Even the *Morning Post?*'

'Yes; even the *Post.*'

'Why?'

'Look here. I do not wish Lady Puddicombe to see *this,*' he replied, taking a newspaper from his pocket, and indicating a paragraph—another brief telegram from Egypt—which ran thus:

'The detachment of the Black Watch which was sent to Matarieh to make a

demonstration against the Bedouins of Zeid-el-Ourdeh has been ordered back to head-quarters, and seems to have lost its other officer—a very distinguished one—Captain Allan Graham, the Hon. the Master of Aberfeldie, who is supposed to have fallen into some of the same butcherly hands amid which Professor Palmer and his companions perished.'

'Good heavens! *her* brother!' exclaimed Miss Hurdell, actually changing colour.

'Yes; and it must be kept from her—to-day, at least,' said Sir Harry, concealing the fatal newspaper.

'Taken by the Bedouins—but she must learn it some time.'

'Well, I don't want her to learn it just now, poor girl, at all events. I can't make a mull of the arrangements for the day, and I don't want her to learn it here, if possible.'

'Why not here?'

'Certainly not from me.'

'Why not from *you?*'

'I hate to be imparter of evil news.'

'Oho,' said Miss Hurdell, elevating her eyebrows; 'sets the wind in that quarter?'

'What do you mean, Lucretia?'

'Well, that she is not the first married lady you have taken a tender interest in.'

'Lucretia!' exclaimed the baronet, in a tone of angry expostulation, as some of their gentlemen guests came noisily in, in Russell cords, top boots, and spurs, some in pink and some in black coats.

At that moment elsewhere were others who were more deeply and terribly interested in the startling tidings from Matarieh, flashed by the same electric wire.

Lord Aberfeldie was leisurely opening the *Times*, which Mr. Tappleton had duly

cut and aired for him, with the other morning papers. His eyes ran rapidly over the columns for the last. news from Egypt, which seemed very tame now, as all the fighting and excitement were over; so Lady Aberfeldie was not watching him, as she used to do, with anxiety, and neither was Olive, who was already deep in the pages of the *Queen*, when an exclamation that escaped him made them both start.

'What is the matter?' cried Lady Aberfeldie. 'You look ill, dear.'

'Uncle, what do you see?' added Olive. 'Is anything wrong with—with——'

'Allan—yes.'

He was pale with a strange grey pallor, totally unlike his usually sunburned and healthy tint, and he looked dazed as his face sank forward on his breast.

'Our poor boy—our poor boy!'

'God help us, Aberfeldie! What is it?'

Olive snatched up the paper, and, after reading the paragraph we have copied, reeled into a chair. And now a great horror fell upon all the three, the mother's memory flashing back to the baby-boy that had crowed and smiled upon her knee, and whose first tottering efforts to cross the nursery floor she remembered yet.

Lord Aberfeldie, after recovering a little from the shock, telegraphed to the War-Office for further information, but could obtain none. They read the fatal paragraph again and again, till every word of it seemed to be burned into their brains, and could but indulge in endless surmises, and hope against hope; for had not the public prints been teeming with the harrowing details of the capture of Professor Palmer, Captain Gill, and Lieutenant Charrington, and of them being pitilessly

slaughtered by the Bedouins of the Aligal tribe?

As Olive recalled all this, her blood grew cold with apprehension. The paragraph, though a terrible one, was frightfully vague. He was 'supposed to have fallen' into the hands of the Bedouins. At all events, his party had come into Grand Cairo *without him!*

She, like Lady Aberfeldie, could not realise it for a time. Alternately she sat like one stunned, and then walked up and down the room with her slender fingers interlaced tightly and clasped upon her head, as if she would thereby still the trouble that throbbed in her brain and repress her heavy sorrow.

In memory and imagination how often did she rehearse her angry parting scene with poor Allan and the last time she saw him—the forcible embrace of Hawke Hol-

croft; the latter's mocking love-making; the horror and loathing with which his touch inspired her; and Allan's terrible glance as he flung away and left her—left her for ever, as it seemed now.

Allan taken captive; he was sure to be slain like those of whom she had read so much lately. He was gone from her, and never more—never again could she show her repentant love for him, or make up for the omissions and follies of the past by days of tenderness in the time to come.

All was over now!

Profound was the speechless grief of his parents, and she was past attempting to console them.

'Oh, Olive darling, don't look so strange!' said Ruby Logan, who had come on a visit to them at Puddicombe Villa.

The tears were running down Ruby's cheeks, while those of Olive were strangely dry, as if her fount of tears was frozen as yet.

Of Evan Cameron, if they thought at all amid this home calamity, they knew the worst—that he was dead and buried like so many of his brother-soldiers who fell at Tel-el-Kebir; but of Allan they had yet the worst to know, if aught was ever known at all, which was extremely improbable.

So the long day passed on and night came, and Olive stood at the open window looking out at the waters of Spithead, the cold air from the sea blowing upon her face. She was in a kind of waking trance rather than deliberate thought, and strange figures like a phantasmagoria seemed to evolve themselves out of the darkness.

But to return to the hunting breakfast at Hurdell Hall.

All unconscious that a fresh sorrow would fill her tender heart ere long, Eveline came down in a charming morning-dress, looking pure and pale as a young arum lily, and was at once the cynosure of many admiring eyes; for, in addition to Sir Harry, Sir Paget, and Mr. Poole, there were seven or eight others present, all in high spirits and eager for the sport. Not that Sir Paget affected field sports much, but he thought that it became his position to do so, and more especially as he was the husband of so young a wife, to display a certain amount of juvenility.

All present were ruddy-featured country gentlemen of various ages, and while discussing an ample and genuine hunting-breakfast, though some who were connected with the farming interest spoke

of the weather and the turnip-fly, of the Devonshire breed and short-horns, of mangold-wurzel and the rotation of crops, matters about which, sooth to say, Sir Paget and Mr. Poole knew no more than they did about the philosophy of the Infinite, the conversation chiefly ran on the matter in hand that day—the disadvantage of having the dogs' collars too tightly buckled, of coupling a young hound with an old one, and so forth.

'A very bad plan,' said Sir Harry, 'as the older dogs always vent their spite on the younger by biting and rolling over them.'

'Because the pulling on both sides is not even,' said the Squire of Furzydowns, a noted old sportsman, 'and, if a pair of dogs so coupled come across a donkey, there is sure to be a row, for, when a bullock will look round in stupid wonder,

a donkey is apt to fly at hounds with tooth and hoof.'

'A glorious morning this for the scent,' said Sir Harry; 'a dry autumn one. And now let us be off. The advantage of hunting early is that cubs or foxes, after a late supper or early breakfast, are seldom in a condition to run long, and get blown, as we all know.'

To Sir Paget, who had neither heart nor interest in sport, and was rapidly discussing the weather in all its probabilities, as to whether there would be a change or continuance of its present aspect and condition, Sir Harry said,

'Puddicombe, are you still determined to ride that bay horse with the white star?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Paget, with just the slightest *soupçon* of bravado.

'Remember, I have warned you that he

is rather a vicious brute, and apt to shy his fences.'

'Please, do not ride him, Sir Paget,' urged Eveline, in a whisper; 'do not, for my sake.'

'I should rather think of my own, if I do it for anyone's sake at all,' he snarled. He could not forgive her the general pallor and sadness of her face. Death, it is said, hallows the dead anew to the living. So it would be with the memory of Evan Cameron in the mind of Eveline, thought Sir Paget bitterly, nor was he far wrong. And, no doubt, it *was* rather hard upon him to know that his wife's thoughts were all of another; but how innocently!

'As regards the bay horse,' he added, 'I will take my chance.'

He was loth to appear unable to do anything, and always deemed such advice

as the present an imputation on his age or capability; thus, he did many a thing he would not have done had Eveline been twenty years older.

After a few words aside with Sir Harry, Eveline turned again to her husband, who had now left the table, and was finally adjusting his tan-coloured boot-tops.

'Do not ride the horse,' said she, entreatingly. 'From what I hear, he is beyond you.'

'Is he?' snarled Sir Paget, who was in one of his worst humours this morning. 'But let me tell you, Lady Puddicombe, that I know something about the choice of a horse, if I don't about the choice of a wife!'

Eveline shrank back at this rude speech, and thought that, sooth to say, he knew little how to choose either.

'Well—ride the horse, if you will,' said she, resignedly.

'I shall!' he replied, sharply.

Lucretia detected that something was wrong, and, raising her voice in reply to something the Squire of Furzydown had said, she exclaimed, laughingly,

'Ah, yes, the country is indeed glorious; for here you can have eggs to breakfast that are laid while your hair is being dressed, and flowers on the table fresh with the morning dew on them—yet, I love London most, after all, especially in the season. And now,' she added, 'shall my Charlie have its nicey, nicey breakfast of cream?'

And she emptied a silver jug of the latter into a china bowl for her wheezy spaniel.

'What's up with old Sir Peter Teazle?' whispered her brother.

'That is more than I can tell you, Harry.'

The two ladies came forth to the door to see the gentlemen mount and depart.

Sir Paget got into his saddle with some difficulty, as the bay hunter swayed round and round, laid its ears back, and looked askance at him, with red and bloodshot eyes.

Eveline knew not of her brother's calamity, and neither did Sir Paget, for none had spoken of Egypt or Egyptian news, and no one at Hurdell Hall was particularly interested in the Black Watch, herself excepted; but she felt a mysterious and unaccountable prevision of coming evil, and once more drew near to offer her pretty hand to Sir Paget, doing so with affected playfulness, as the eyes of others were admiringly upon her; but he, giving full rein to his thoughts about that dead Cameron, whom she had loved

and he hated, stooped from his saddle, and said to her, with a bland smile meant also for other eyes,

'I have read, Lady Puddicombe, that "nothing exalts a man so much in a woman's mind as his dying. Look at the affection of widows as compared with that of wives." Ah, you are sorrowful, no doubt; but sorrow takes a long while to kill anyone.'

She knew well what he meant. Her pale cheek crimsoned, and she turned without a word, deeming it both absurd and cruel that he should thus be retrospectively jealous.

The hunters rode merrily off, all in high spirits, save Sir Paget, who jerked away with his head and was disposed to sulk, for the visit to Hurdell Hall had wrought no change on Eveline; thus he did not,

like his companions, enjoy the delightful sense of rest and peace in the cool morning ride to covert.

The country was silent; ploughmen and shepherds were, as yet, scarcely abroad; and the full-fed cattle lay couched on the damp grass that glistened with dew, and from amid which their breaths rose like silvery steam, and ere long the pack was in sight—Grasper, Pilot, Holdfast, Catch, and all the rest of them—

'With tails high mounted, ears hung low, and throats
With a whole gamut filled, of heavenly notes'

—at least in the estimation of the huntsmen.

Ere long the pack was put into the covert, and stirrup leathers were tightened and readjusted in hot haste, but with the hunting, the whipping of unbroken hounds that took to running after sheep, the gallops over a few fields to get up an

appetite for an early luncheon at the Squire of Furzydown's, the 'chopping' of cubs, our story has nothing to do, save in so far as one episode of the day is concerned.

Sir Paget in his heart wished 'the whole affair at Jericho,' or in a warmer latitude. To him it was no amusement to set out without time for shaving, to breakfast at an untimeous hour and before he could get up an appetite, and to ride through the morning mist, with icy feet and grasping reins sodden with dew, with the certainty of an attack of rheumatism, when he should have been cosily nestling in bed; and in addition to all these, having a terrible conflict ever and anon with the bay hunter. Sir Harry thought him 'a silly old fogie, who *would* go cub-hunting to show the world how juvenile he was,' and he was now beginning to console

himself with the prospect of a luxurious luncheon at Furzydown and the long, lazy afternoon he would enjoy there before riding leisurely back in the evening to dinner at Hurdell Hall, when Sir Harry would be sure to sing them the old Coplow hunt song—

> 'Talk of horses and hounds
> And the system of kennel,
> Give me Leicestershire nags
> And the hounds of old Menyell!'

To Eveline the long day after the early breakfast passed very slowly at the Hall. She was in no anxiety for Sir Paget's speedy return, especially after the cloudy manner of his departure, but there were no other lady visitors there just then, and she and Lucretia Hurdell had not a thought, sympathy, or topic in common, and she sighed in utter weariness of spirit as the October day drew to a close, and

the brown and purple shadows of evening began to fall.

She thought how many such empty days as this were before her, as autumn passed into winter, winter into spring, and the joyless summer—joyless at least to her—would come again. Every morning with its hopelessness, every noon with its listlessness, every evening seeming more blank than the one that preceded it. Would she ever more feel bright and merry as at Dundargue, and regain her sweet and playful habits of caressing affection?

And for whom?

She stood in one of the many beautiful Tudor bay windows overlooking the terrace and chase, idly and full of her own thoughts, and curiously enough, to her, the rustle of the ivy on the painted panes, of leaves as they fell from the trees, the stillness of the evening hour, and the

cawing of the rooks in the old belfry of the house seemed ominous of coming evil.

Dusk had come on, the trees were taking strange shapes against the sunset sky, a bat circled noiselessly before her, and the silver crescent of the moon came out above a coppice.

A few of these trivial things were, by after events, fixed in her memory, and associated with that calm and almost sultry October evening—the lurid brightness of the sun as he set beyond the black stems of the trees of the chase, the perfume of roses from a majolica jardinière in the bay window, and the angry hum of a great bee entangled among the lace of the curtains.

Suddenly she became aware that a group of men, some on horseback and some on foot, was slowly approaching the house

by the avenue. Amid this group were four carrying a burden—a man apparently—on a door, or some such improvised litter.

Then appeared a groom leading a horse by the bridle—the bay hunter with a white star on his forehead!

A gasping cry escaped her; her poor, torn heart leaped, and then seemed to cease beating, with the dreadful certainty that something—a new calamity—had happened.

CHAPTER X.

ALLAN'S ADVENTURE.

Evil tidings travel fast in these our days of electricity, and true it was that the unfortunate Allan Graham had fallen into the hands of the Bedouins, but nothing more was known.

He had disappeared from Matarieh!

When his detachment marched into headquarters, Sergeant Farquharson reported that the Master of Aberfeldie had left the village for a ramble in the vicinity one evening, so far as could be known, and had not returned. After a careful search by

the Highlanders at a certain spot, a cigar-case which had been given to him by Cameron of Stratherroch had been found, and in the immediate vicinity the soil bore the impression of foot and hoof marks, as if a struggle of some kind had taken place. If killed he had not been killed there, as his body could not be found.

Beyond these meagre and unsatisfactory details nothing more was known, save that the Bedouins, intent on plunder and outrage, had been daily hovering about in the vicinity of the mounds and ruins of Heliopolis.

Allan had felt very lonely after the loss of his friend Cameron, all the more lonely and full of tender interest for the general circumstances of his life and fate, and thus—as the sergeant reported—he had rambled from the village where his men were cantoned, a little way into the vicin-

ity to smoke and to ponder over the past and future.

After Cameron's catastrophe he felt himself more disposed to think of Olive, and to think kindly and tenderly, and of his mother's explanatory letter concerning the extraordinary conduct of Holcroft and Olive's love and grief; for we are told that 'among all the many kinds of first love, that which begins in childish companionship is the strongest and most enduring; when passion comes to unite its force to long affection, love is at its spring tide,' and in childish affection had the love of Allan Graham and Olive Raymond begun.

He lay stretched on a patch of grass, where two or three banana-trees grew near a ruined wall. The setting sun shed its red light far along the desert that stretched to the land of Goshen, with its

luxuriant plains—yea, to the far horizon—and Allan, a thoughtful and a well-read man, as he looked around him, reflected, as he often did, how strange was the land where just then his duty led him—how strange that the Egyptians were there, without a tradition of a parent stock or of another land; that it was only known that a few generations after the Deluge they had become a great nation. In the words of Apollonius Rhodius:

'Oldest of mortals they who peopled earth,
Ere yet in heaven the sacred signs had birth.
. . . . . .
Ere men the lunar wanderings learned to read,
Ere yet the heroes of Deucalion's blood
Pelasgia purpled with a glorious brood;
The fertile plains of Egypt flourished then,
Productive cradle of the first of men.'

Allan thought as he manipulated and lit another cigar, that the Egyptians of Arabi Pasha must be of different and inferior

stuff from those to whom the poet of the Argonauts referred.

And there, but a little way off, lay Heliopolis and Matarieh, two places of great and solemn memories—Heliopolis, where Herodotus sought the wisest men in Egypt; where Strabo says they pointed out the house of Plato, where he then resided; where Potiphar lived, who bought Joseph from the patriarch; and Matarieh, a spot where the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the Holy Child Jesus tarried, including a well under a withered sycamore in which—according to the legendaries—the Holy Mother washed her Divine Infant's linen; a spot the turbanned Mussulmans still view with respect; and thereby was the piper of Allan's company playing 'The Evening Retreat,' and from the distance, over the flat ground, came the sound of

his pipes, as he played 'The Birks of Aberfeldie.'

Perhaps it was that his reflections were not of a very lively nature, or that he was wearied by a long reconnaissance that morning in the direction of El Khan-Kah, but he, perilously for himself, dropped insensibly asleep, all unaware that a party of Bedouin horsemen, with hoofs muffled in the soft sand, had formed a kind of semicircle round him, cutting off all chance of escape.

He could not have been asleep more than five minutes when the little prick of a lance which drew blood roughly roused him. He started to his feet and found himself confronted, surrounded indeed, by some twenty dusky sons of the desert, with hawk-like features, eyes that gleamed, and teeth that glistened exultantly.

Their weapons—Remington rifles or swords—were all pointed at him, and he could but surrender his sword and revolver, but with a sigh of despair and mortification. He might have slain one at least, but to what end? as the next moment he would inevitably be cut to pieces himself, while, perhaps, by not courting death then, he might only be delaying a cruel and unknown doom.

These Bedouins could see that Allan was a magnificent specimen of manhood—a man born to command. They did not further molest him, save that one suddenly threw a looped cord over his right arm, and secured it to the bow of his saddle, thereby indicating significantly enough that he was to consider himself, in the first place, a prisoner.

One who rode a camel, and seemed to be in authority, pointed towards the hills—

the Jebel Dimeshk range—and they got into motion at once, rather roughly dragging Allan after them. His proud heart swelled at this indignity; he felt all the danger of his position, and knew that, if he would escape death or some strange and protracted captivity, it was necessary to temporise and dissemble.

Mustering all that he knew of Arabic, picked up in the Punjab and beyond the Indus, after a few moments of agonising reflection, he said to the man whose special prisoner he was,

'Now that I am your captive, what are you going to do with me?'

'Take you to the hills,' replied the Bedouin, surprised, and not ill-pleased to hear a Frank address him in his own language.

'For what purpose?'

'To keep you till ransomed—perhaps.'

The adjective had rather an unpleasant sound just then, so Allan said,

'And if not ransomed?'

The Bedouin slapped the butt of his Remington rifle and grinned, showing all his pearly teeth, with fierce signification.

'Who is your leader?' asked Allan, after a pause.

'That you will discover when you see him.'

'I trust he will spare my life, at all events.'

'What does your life, or the lives of all the accursed Franks in the world, matter?' exclaimed another Bedouin; 'may you all perish by the hand of God by drowning, as Pharaoh and his host perished, or by His causing the earth to open and swallow you up, as, the Koran tells us, happened to Korah!'

Whether a rumour had reached them of

the sharp manner in which Colonel Warren overtook and punished the Arabian assassins of Professor Palmer and his companions in misfortune, Allan knew not. One fact was evident, that they were resolved to lose no time in carrying him off to their tents among the sandy recesses of Jebel Dimeshk.

They ambled on their way so fast, keeping him at a species of run, that he was on the point of sinking, and besought them to spare him a little; so, at the command of their leader, they halted for a little time in the starlight, and, weary and worn with toil and many emotions, he threw himself on the ground to rest.

He closed his eyes, not to sleep, but to think over his new and calamitous position, and the chances of achieving an escape from it. If money was required—unless the sum demanded proved too enor-

mous—he could produce a ransom, and he turned uneasily on his sandy couch as he thought over all his chances of success.

How like a horrible dream—a nightmare it all appeared—as those terrible hours spent in the vault at Dundargue had done.

What would be thought of his disappearance by the regiment, and at home, and memory flashed back to his soldierly father and tender mother—for, with all her aristocratic pride, tender she had ever been to him—so his first thoughts were of her. 'In the man whose childhood has known caresses there is always a fibre of memory that can be touched to gentle issues;' so—a captain now, and in such savage hands—his first ideas were of his mother's grief, rather than of poor, repentant Olive.

He might be butchered in the desert, and never heard of again, for his life was

at the mercy and caprice of the most lawless people in the world.

His disappearance as a mystery would soon become public property at home. There would, he knew, be all manner of newspaper paragraphs, suggestions, and surmises for a few weeks, and then, when these ceased, his story and his fate would be as much forgotten as last year's snow.

Again his captors began their march towards the mountains; and times there were, as he struggled forward to keep pace with them, when, in fierce revolt against the whole situation and its dreadful uncertainties, he felt as if his heart would burst, and a kind of agonised hopelessness crept into it.

The Bedouins conveyed him some five and twenty miles or more into the mountains, till they reached a kind of oasis, where their tents, which were very numer-

ous, stood. Day was on the point of breaking, and Allan was utterly worn out.

However keen excitement may be, Nature will demand her due, so he slept on a dirty Bedouin *barracan*, and ere he did so, so great was the mental and bodily toil he had undergone, that he felt a kind of pleasure as drowsiness came upon him—a happiness to find oblivion—oblivion for a time even. To forget was a species of joy. And so he slept, despite those plagues of Egypt, the gnats, mosquitoes, and sand-flies.

In the morning he was informed that the chief of the tribe, who would be the arbiter of his fate, was as yet absent; and that, if he made the slightest attempt to escape, he would be shot down without mercy.

'God is great,' added his informant, who, like most Mussulmans, interlarded his

conversation with pious allusions and quotations from the Koran; 'and whatever He has decreed will and must come to pass.'

For breakfast they brought him a few dates soaked in melted butter, a little sweet milk and curds. So simple are the habits of the Bedouins that one can subsist for a whole day on such a repast, and deem himself happy and luxurious if he can add a small quantity of corn-flour or a little ball of rice. Meat being usually reserved for the greatest festivals, they rarely kill a kid, save for a marriage or a funeral, though some tribes eat the flesh of the gazelle and the desert cow.

A couple of days on such food, with rough usage and toil—for they compelled him to groom their horses—a toil degrading to a man of spirit, rendered Allan somewhat faint.

He learned incidentally that there was another Frank a prisoner in their hands, who no doubt, like himself, was anxiously awaiting the return of the Bedouin chief.

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG THE DWELLERS IN TENTS.

With waking each morning Allan's miserable thoughts returned, and, undeterred by the threat of being shot if he attempted to escape, he thought of nothing else, and closely inspected the Bedouin camp and its vicinity with that view, despite the warning of the principal Bedouin, whose name he ascertained to be Abdallah, or 'the servant of God,' who repeatedly told him that he hoped 'the English would have their faces confounded,' the exclamation of the Angel Gabriel when he

threw a handful of gravel against the foe at the battle of Bedr.

As the Bedouins never reside in towns or occupy houses, they live in encampments, pitching their tents wherever they can find pasturage for their horses and camels, changing the site of their abode as often as the support of their cattle or the vicinity of a more powerful and hostile tribe may compel them. Sometimes they sow a little Indian corn, and return to reap it when grown. The milk of their cattle and a few esculents found in the desert are their chief food.

All are trained to the use of arms, and are skilled in horsemanship, and Allan could perceive that the care of the flocks and herds was committed mostly to the women, while the youth of the tribe—all fellows spare of form, light of limb, and active as their native gazelles—were in

their saddles scouring round the camp, and practising the use of the javelin, the spear, and the Remington rifle, with which many in Lower Egypt were now armed, as they had been flung away in thousands by the fugitive soldiers of Arabi.

The innate love of freedom which is fostered by the facilities for a nomadic life, and the desert-locomotion which his horses and camels afford him, impart to the Bedouin a dignified and haughty bearing, which contrasts powerfully with the servility and pusillanimity of the rustic sons of Egypt.

Unchanged from unknown generations, they are the same as when Volney wrote of them—'Pacific in their camp, they are everywhere else in a habitual state of war. The husbandmen whom they pillage hate them; the travellers whom they despoil speak ill of them; and the Turks, who

dread them, endeavour to divide and corrupt them.'

Their wandering life affords more freedom to their women than usually falls to the lot of Moslem females, and the wild desert, where they always dwell, becomes in many cases the actual scene of those keen and passionate love adventures which are depicted in the tales and poems of the Arabians.

If Allan would escape from these Bedouins, he would require to have all his wits about him, and not risk the slightest mistake.

'The child of the desert, reared in continual wandering, possesses in the fullest degree the activity of *sense*,' says a writer. 'His spirit is all abroad in his perceptive organs; he is voluble and sagacious, quick, passionate, and sympathetic, but by no means intellectual. Quickness of percep-

tion and strength of imagination are mental characteristics of the Bedouin, and superstition, the child of ignorance, is nowhere more powerful than among the wanderers of the desert.'

But in what direction was Allan to bend his steps, if he contrived to elude his captors? He might only wander into the barren desert—a sea of sand—there to perish of hunger and thirst, or be overtaken to suffer a cruel death.

Reflection showed him that it would be better to temporise—to await the return of the sheikh, and endeavour to treat about a ransom.

Beyond the encampment of rude tents, which they carry with them from wadi to wadi—the male portion employing their horses and camels in the transport from one oasis to another—Allan could see the desert, traversed by the camel-route to

Suez by Regum-el-Khel, spreading far away to the north-east, the horizon enveloped in fog in the morning and evening, for the season was moist now.

Near the camp was the tomb of a santon, or holy man, surmounted by a little white dome, and shaded by date-trees.

Had the camp been pitched on higher ground, instead of in a green hollow, Allan might have known his precise whereabouts, as he would have seen in the distance to the south Mount Mokattam, crowned by the citadel of Cairo, with the many minarets of the great capital at its base.

On the third day, a commotion was caused by the arrival of the sheikh, who rode in, accompanied by an escort, all well armed and mounted. Allan was at once brought before him, full of natural anxiety to learn his fate, and great was

his satisfaction to discover in him Zeid-el-Ourdeh, the Bedouin whom he had found wounded and bleeding near the camp of the Black Watch, and whom he had succoured and sent rearward to the hospital at Ismailia.

The recognition was mutual. He sprang from his horse, tossed the bridle to an attendant, and welcomed Allan to his tents, adding,

'I called you my brother when, after Kassassin, I thought the hand of death was upon me; and you are not the less my brother now that you have eaten bread and salt with my people.'

He had quite recovered from his sword-wound apparently, and as he moved about in his long, flowing dress, with the ends of his shawl-turban floating over his shoulders, his bearing and aspect were stately and graceful.

Allan, encouraged to find that his personal safety was now so far secured, ventured to speak of his liberty; but Zeid shook his head, while a glitter, suggestive, not of cruelty, but unmistakably of greed and avarice, came into his eyes; and he informed his prisoner that he would have to accompany the tribe further into the desert, to another oasis, where the grass was green.

His heart sank on hearing this.

Whether Zeid-el-Ourdeh meant to retain him as a species of hostage, in the hope of a ransom, or in the absurd idea of attaching him to his own fortunes, as useful from his knowledge of arms and European tactics, Allan could not divine. Anyway, his life for the present was safe in his hands, though Zeid's power might fail to protect him from other Bedouins, or the exasperated fellaheen of Arabi Pasha.

Zeid gave him back his claymore, which Allan greatly valued, as it was a family heirloom—an old Ferrara blade, which his father and grandfather had worn in the Black Watch long before him.

Zeid's own sword was a very remarkable one, which he had found in the sand near the Red Sea. It was long, straight, and double-edged, with a cross-guard of the middle ages, and had evidently been the trusty blade of some pious crusader, who had lost it, with his life perhaps, on the way to Jerusalem; and, like the sword of the Cid, it was inscribed, *Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum.*

'You look half-starved!' said Zeid, as he regarded Allan's face.

'I am wholly starved. I have had only some dates and milk for three days,' replied Allan, who, with some satisfaction, heard him order a kid to be killed, that

they might have a repast together, and then he ordered the other Frankish prisoner to be brought before him.

'Holcroft!' exclaimed Allan, in a breathless voice, and scarcely able to believe his senses, when one, who seemed undoubtedly that obnoxious personage, was dragged before the sheikh with a sullen and defiant air scarcely suited to the situation. His European surtout and trousers were discoloured, tattered, and torn; he had on a scarlet tarboosh, and wore his fair beard at some length now.

'Holcroft!' exclaimed Allan again, 'you here? Here in Egypt—what miracle is this?'

'Your words express more surprise than pleasure,' replied Holcroft, while Zeid-el-Ourdeh looked from one to the other in some surprise at their evident sudden recognition. 'Ah,' he continued, with a

malevolent grimace, 'you thought I was drowned, no doubt, and feeding the fishes in the Solent!'

'You are reserved for a drier and more deserved death, I presume,' said Allan.

'Sneer as you may over me and my misfortunes——'

'Misfortunes, you miscreant! But how in the name of wonder——'

'If you care to know how I come to be here, in the same unpleasant and unsavoury hands with yourself—a gunboat picked me up off Southsea, for I am a strong swimmer, but, for all that, was too exhausted to be sent ashore. I was put into the sick-bay and brought on here, all the way to Ismailia, and then turned adrift to live by my wits. I made my way to Cairo, and was fain to become billiard-marker at the hotel where I saw you, and once again at the review before the Abdin palace. The

hotels, and cafés too, tired of me. I was setting out on foot to overtake some of your invalids *en route* to Ismailia when these infernal Bedouins nabbed me, and I am here.'

'And now that you are here, may I inquire what you mean to do with your precious self?'

'Take office under the Khedive's government. There will be no end of nice pickings for Europeans now that the shindy is over.'

'Office—as what?'

'Oh, anything—I am not particular—Inspector-General of Harems would suit me to a hair—down to the ground, in fact.'

'Bantering villain! And how about those diamonds you stole from Miss Raymond—a luckless heirloom in our family, always bringing evil to the holder or wearer?'

'Well, they have brought no evil to me yet,' replied Holcroft, with a defiant grin—a dogged one too; 'I have them safe here,' he added, slapping his breast pocket, 'and don't mean to part with them. They are quite a fortune to me.'

And he had the folly, the madness, in mere bravado, to show them for a moment.

'Keep these, fellow—they are certain to bring you ill-luck in some way.'

Allan was nearer the truth than he thought, as the sharp eyes of the sheikh saw the flash of the stones, and the spirit of acquisition was instantly kindled in his breast.

'Well,' thought Allan, 'this unexpected meeting is a strange coincidence; but, as Miss Braddon says, "life is made up of curious coincidences."'

CHAPTER XII.

KISMET.

Allan was aware that the sheikh had seen the jewels, though for a moment only, that were in Holcroft's possession. He knew that greed and the *Lex Talionis*, or law of retaliation, are distinctive marks of the Bedouin character; but he also knew that their regard for hospitality is not a less remarkable characteristic, and that even an enemy is secure if he can obtain refuge in a tent.

Ali Bey (otherwise known as Don Pedro de la Badia) relates that when a Bedouin heard that his wife had given food to his

mortal foe, who had sought charity at his tent, not knowing who or what he was, observed, 'I should probably have slain my enemy had I found him here; but I should not have spared my wife had she neglected the sacred laws of hospitality.'

But Allan felt doubtful how the sheikh might be disposed to respect these laws in the case of one like Holcroft, who had not fled to his tents for succour, but been brought there a captive, and had comported himself in a dogged and defiant way.

'And you had actually sunk to being a billiard-marker?' said Allan.

'For a time—yes; nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal. When taking stock of my affairs I found them shady—very; my assets falling far short of my liabilities. Thus I was forced to play out the only card left me, and put

the screw upon your wealthy cousin, Miss Raymond. Sorry I can't give you a copy of that remarkable photo of Olive and myself, of which, no doubt, you all know now.'

'All,' replied Allan, amazed that the man could exult in his utter and degrading villainy. To him it seemed almost incredible that one who was by birth a gentleman, the son of a gallant old officer, and had been the associate of gentlemen, could fall so low as Holcroft had done, and be so callous and shameless.

'Oh, for a glass of bitter or Burton and a good cigar!' said Holcroft; 'and, by the way, as you seem to speak his lingo, will you ask this old nigger in the striped counterpane why he keeps me here, and what he means to do with me.'

Allan inquired this of Zeid in Arabic; but to him it seemed that Hawke Hol-

croft totally failed to comprehend or to take it in that he was in any peril at all. As an Englishman he thought that no 'dashed foreigner' dared meddle with or molest him, yet these Bedouins had him at their mercy sure enough; and to judge of matters or chances by the standard of Regent Street and Piccadilly, would hardly do under the summits of the Jebel Dimeshk.

Remarking the tarboosh worn by Holcroft, and using Allan as an interpreter, the sheikh asked,

'Are you a Mussulman?'

'No,' replied Holcroft, with a laugh.

'A Christian, then?'

'No,' was the strange response.

'You must believe either in the Prophet or Christ?'

'I believe in neither.'

'Unhappy wretch!' exclaimed the sheikh, with astonishment in his tone.

'Men may believe in both, yet follow neither.'

'So do the devils believe—and like devils tremble,' said the Bedouin.

'Well, I do not.'

'Do you feel no trust in God?'

'None!' was the blunt and defiant reply.

'Why?'

'He has always left me to myself.'

Allan sighed at this hopeless response, while the blasphemy of it filled the Bedouin—who, whatever his shortcomings in the way of *meum* and *tuum* were, was pious in his way—with horror and indignation. After a pause, he said,

'Look at his eyes—they are grey; and does not the Koran say that on the last day "we shall gather the wicked together having grey eyes."'

The twentieth chapter certainly has that

curious remark, for with the Arabs—a black-eyed race—to have grey eyes is the mark of an enemy or a person to be avoided.

'You knew this man in Frangistan!' said Zeid.

'Too well,' replied Allan.

'Then he has wronged thee?' was the sharp question and suspicion of the Bedouin.

'Deeply; he tried to kill me, indeed.'

'Yet he lives?'

'Yes.'

'Why is this?'

'I thought he was dead—drowned,' replied Allan, evasively.

'Take this sword and smite off his head. The blade is sharp enough.'

Allan shook his head and drew back.

'You Franks are fools!' said Zeid, while the miserable Holcroft, though he knew not a word of what passed, guessed the

terrible import of it, and glanced imploringly at Allan.

'Do you think,' said Zeid, after a pause, 'that his neck is turned to ivory, as the Koran tells us that of Moses was, when he was about to be beheaded for slaying an Egyptian ?'

'The Koran—always that weary Koran!' thought Allan, impatiently.

'Will you tell him,' said Holcroft, 'that, if he expects a ransom from me, I have neither a friend nor a farthing in the world.'

Allan did so.

'Liar! may God burn thee!' exclaimed Zeid, as he thought of the diamonds, and, acting in obedience to a sign from him, Abdallah, unknown to Holcroft, was stealing behind him, armed with a heavy and deeply curved Damascus sabre of the keenest edge.

There was a flash in the sunshine as the blade was swept round by a swift back-handed stroke, and the head of the miserable Hawke Holcroft rolled along the ground, as his body fell prostrate on it in a heap, with the red blood welling out from every vein and artery of the neck.

'He has met his *kismet*,' said Zeid, complacently.

At this sudden catastrophe, Allan turned away horrified—utterly appalled. He had seen men wounded in every way, and mutilated too by shot and shell, but had never seen aught like this—and in cold blood, too!

'He believed neither in the Prophet nor in Christ,' said Zeid, complacently; 'now that he is in hell, that cemetery for lost souls, he may learn the truth.'

And, torn from the pocket of the wretch-

ed creature's tattered surtout, the fatal diamonds were placed in the hands of Zeid-el-Ourdeh.

Allan, as he saw them sparkling in the sunshine, thought of all he heard his father say of them, and marvelled to whom they would bring evil next. If to the sheikh, he was fated never to know.

It was some time before he recovered the shock this scene gave him, but it rendered his desire to be gone—to be free—irrepressible; yet he dreaded just then to approach the subject with Zeid. Whether it was the excitement of a blood-shedding or acquisition of the diamonds, or both together, Zeid was in high good humour, and about noon gave Allan a dinner unusually sumptuous in his own tent.

Upon a tray of tinned copper were placed saucers of pickles, salad, and salt, with thin cakes of bread, and in the centre

a dish of rice, highly seasoned with spice and saffron. Neither forks nor spoons were there, and he had to use his fingers. Thus it made him shiver to see the sheikh plunge his copper-coloured digits into the dish one moment and thrust them half-way down his open throat the next.

He always clapped his hands when he wanted any attendance.

A cotton towel surrounded the tray on the ground, on which they occasionally wiped their hands; then pipes of tobacco followed, and the sheikh became sociable, as he reclined back against a saddle over which some shawls and a barracan were spread, and Allan began to cast about in his own mind how to approach the subject of his departure.

He gathered courage from the knowledge that, after eating bread and salt together, or even salt alone, in the East,

produces mutual obligations of friendship.

The sheikh was a man of great piety, after his own fashion. He said his prayers five times daily, the first time being between daybreak and sunrise, turning towards Mecca, and five times daily he washed his hands. He was a firm believer in magic, and that there existed somewhere in Upper Egypt, Ishmonie, or the Petrified City—so called on account of the great number of statues, representing men, women, children, and animals, with which its silent streets abound—all of which he believed to have been once animated creatures, miraculously changed into stone by a whisper of the prophet, in all the various attitudes of standing, sitting, or falling, but none of which are ever visible save to true believers.

He also firmly believed in the miracu-

lous egg laid by a hen after Tel-el-Kebir, on which was inscribed the words—'Arabi has lost the battle because he mutilated the corpses of the enemy. Allah has punished him, but He will give victory to him in the end, if he will keep the commands in the future.'

'Hah!' said he, after a long pull at his chibouque, 'at Tel-el-Kebir your bare-legged men came on as hell will come at the last day.'

'How is that?'

'As the Koran tells us, with seventy thousand halters, each dragged by seventy thousand angels—a power nothing can withstand.'

'Accursed as you unbelievers are,' said he, after a pause, 'God seems to give you a wondrous power, even as he gave Solomon the gift of miracles in a degree greater than anyone before him; the animals and

the vegetables obeyed him, and he was carried by the winds of heaven above the stars therein, and his power over the genii was by a seal ring, of which one part was brass and the other iron, and upon it was graven the great name of God. Yes, though unbelievers, you are swift in action as the pigeons of Aleppo; not like the Osmanli, who would catch hares in waggons,' he added, with reference to the proverbial slowness of the Turks.

'Sheikh,' said Allan, in his most persuasive manner, 'you know that I befriended you when in sore peril.'

'Yes, as my brother would have done,' said Zeid, his expressive face lighting up and his black eyes sparkling under the hood of his burnous, as he pointed with his left hand to his right shoulder, which had been slashed by the long sword of one of our Life-Guardsmen.

'Well, in memory of that you will allow me to depart home freely to my people?'

'Why? Are you not comfortable enough here? Is not one place that God has made as good as another? And who and what are your people? With all their skill and power, they are but wretched unbelievers, who go to battle with their legs bare, accompanied by bags of devils, that squall and groan, like those who strove to defame Solomon.'

'Do be just, sheikh!' urged Allan.

'I shall—is not justice the sister of piety?'

'You will allow me to go, then?'

'I have not said so. Why leave the desert and go back to cities, where men become intoxicated with the pleasures of this life, and forget that which is to come?'

Allan sighed. By this time he was weary

of the sheikh and his stilted conversation.

Beginning with the inevitable aphorism, 'There is only one God and Mohammed is his Prophet,' the sheikh, after a pause, continued thus between long whiffs of his cherry-stick pipe: 'Stay with us and pray with us five times a day, each time turning to the Kebbah; eat not in the daytime during the whole feast of Ramadan, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, give alms to the widow and the orphan. These are the sources from which all goodness springs. Stay with us and do all these things. Become my brother indeed—a son of the desert. Why go back among the accursed Franks? You know how to use the sword, the spear, and the rifle. Stay with us; we shall give you a rich pelisse, a good blood mare, and a Bedouin girl, beautiful, good, and virtuous.'

This programme scarcely suited the

views of the Master of Aberfeldie, but the situation was such a grave one that he dared not laugh at it.

'But you need not go to Mecca,' said the sheikh, as an after-thought.

'Why?'

'God is everywhere—why seek Him at Mecca, when we have Him here in the desert?'

Allan pled hard, and spoke of bribes and ransom, but apparently in vain, and he began to get sorely perplexed by the prospect before him, especially if the tribe took their departure—of which there was every prospect—in search of 'pastures new' further from Grand Cairo, and towards the plain of Muggreh.

He was obliged to dissemble his disgust and mortification, and could only hope of finding an opportunity of 'making,' as he thought, 'a clean bolt of it.'

A few uneventful days passed, and during these he could not help being struck with the simplicity of the domestic life and manners of the Sheikh Zeid-el-Ourdeh and his family.

Though the commander of more than six hundred horse, he did not disdain to saddle and bridle his own steed or to give him his barley and chopped straw.

In his humble tent his wife made the coffee, kneaded the dough, and cooked all the victuals, though a kind of princess in the desert and among her people. His daughters and kinswomen attended to the linen, and, closely veiled, went to the wells or springs for water, with classic-looking pitchers of brown ware balanced on their gracefully-carried heads—in ways, manners, and ideas all unchanged from those described by Homer, or as we find them in the history of Abraham and in Genesis.

It was while a prisoner thus with Zeid, that Allan heard the strange story promulgated by Arabi, that all Egyptians who fell fighting for the faith would come back to earth as spirits mounted on snow-white horses and armed with miraculous swords to completely exterminate the British—an idea evidently borrowed from the Koran, which ascribes Mohamed's victory at Bedr to his having as allies three thousand spirits led by the angel Gabriel mounted on his horse Haizum.

On this subject the Paris *Temps* recorded that an Arab servant belonging to their correspondent asked the latter whether he had seen any of the returned spirits from Kassassin in recent encounters, and, on being answered in the negative, declared that the correspondent could not see them because he was *not* an Englishman.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST OF SIR PAGET.

And now to glance homeward at more civilised scenes—to the catastrophe at Hurdell Hall.

The terrible tidings were soon made known to Eveline that Sir Paget, on the homeward ride from Furzydown, had been suddenly seized by an unaccountable fit of irritation, and, in defiance of all advice and entreaty, though a bad horseman, had lashed and spurred the bay hunter—a vicious brute—while needlessly rushing it at a high fence, and been thrown with terrible violence.

In short, his neck was broken, and he had died on the spot without pain. A door had been procured from an adjoining barnyard, and on this humble bier the body had been brought to the Hall.

As one in a dreadful dream Eveline listened to all this, and the awful shadow of something—*something*, as yet unthought of and unconceived, fell blackly and bleakly across the dark horizon of her life, as she saw the body borne past her—the body she shrank from touching—borne past her indoors; and a darker shadow would yet fall, when she learned the news from Egypt.

Weakened by all she had undergone hitherto, and overcome by the sudden horror of the present event, Eveline could scarcely stand.

'You cannot go up the staircase to bed,' said Lucretia Hurdell, kindly.

'Oh—yes; yes, I can,' replied Eveline, with dry lips.

But she sank in a heap on the Persian carpet.

'Lift her up, Harry,' said his sister.

Harry was only too ready, and raised her at once in his strong arms.

'Oh, please to put me down,' said Eveline, imploringly; 'don't touch me—I can walk.'

'Nonsense, dear Lady Puddicombe—you must permit me,' he urged.

And holding the helpless girl close to him—so close as to preclude all attempted resistance on her part—he bore her steadily upstairs, and past the room where *it* lay, covered with a sheet, and straight to a new apartment prepared for her, followed by his sister and Clairette.

The fast, horsey baronet's breath ming-

led with hers, but unconsciously for her, poor girl! Her soft face reclined on his shoulder, and he saw just then, more than ever, how fair and delicate—how very lovely she was; and he began to develop —or scheme out—some very ambitious plans of his own.

Hurdell Hall and the Hurdell estates were rather deeply dipped, and thus 'Old Pudd's money, even if encumbered by such a lovely bride, would be very acceptable when the time came.'

So thought Sir Harry, with the man—but a few hours dead—lying stark and stiff within a few yards of him.

Fortunately for Eveline, 'Nature's innocent opium, fatigue'—with her it was fatigue of mind—procured her some sleep; thus she was supposed to be the better able for what she would be compelled to hear on the morrow, as a telegram had

arrived from Lady Aberfeldie—addressed to her—a document that, as Sir Harry said, 'proved a regular floorer, by Jove!'

In the morning, he said,

'She must not be told, as yet, of what yesterday's paper contained—the mysterious disappearance of her brother, to whom she seems most tenderly attached.'

'But how about the telegram from Southsea?' asked Lucretia. 'No doubt it refers to that event. Indeed, we do not know what it contains, good or bad news. It must be given to her; we have no right to conceal or keep it back, and may commit mischief by doing so.'

Sir Harry tugged his straw-coloured moustache with an air of perplexity, and said, while busy with coffee and game-pie,

'By all means, then; if Lady Puddicombe is to know about her brother—which, I fear, will cut her up more than

poor old Puddicombe's catastrophe—there is no one who can break the news to her better than you, Lucretia.'

'How?'

'You are such a precious cool hand, don't you know.'

Miss Hurdell looked as if this was not very flattering, but quitted the luxurious breakfast-table, saying,

'Poor thing, she is not fit to hear any more bad news; she has such a worn-out look already.'

The telegram *did* refer to Allan—a most unwise mode of breaking such terrible intelligence—but Lady Aberfeldie never doubted that her daughter must have seen the public prints.

Eveline uttered a low wail, and fainted. A cry of terror escaped Clairette, who drew away the pillows from under her mistress's head, opened the collar of her

laced night-dress, to let the air play freely about her delicate neck and white bosom, while she bathed her temples freely with Rimmel and Eau-de-Cologne; and Miss Hurdell, whose nature was somewhat hard, and who had never seen anyone faint before, looked on with some fear and suspicion, as animation slowly came back to the lovely face, with gasping sobs on the lips and heavy respirations, which made her bosom heave and fall.

George Eliot says, with truth, 'It is a wonderful moment the first time we stand by one who has fainted, and witness the fresh birth of consciousness spreading itself over the blank features like the rising sunlight on the Alpine summits that lay ghastly and dead under the leaden twilight. A slight shudder, and the frost-bound eyes recover their liquid light, for an instant they show the inward

semi-consciousness of an infant, then with a little start they open wider, and begin to *look,* the present is visible, but only as a strange writing, and the interpreter memory is not yet there.'

The dull mental agony that comes after acute anguish or a great shock, proved too much for Eveline now, and she became prostrate, seriously ill in the hands of her new friends, and Clairette wrote instantly to Olive Raymond.

Eveline at times burst into passionate sobs, then she would lie very still with her long lashes closed and the tears oozing from under them, slowly down her pale cheeks, though her slender throat would be agitated by those after-sobs that seem so uncontrollable. Other times she would lie perfectly still, lost in deep thought, as she pictured all the past and tender love her manly brother had ever

borne her, and how gently he pitied her, when he discovered her love for the lost Evan Cameron.

'The devil!' said Sir Harry to himself, as he smoked a cigar on the terrace under her windows, and looked up there from time to time and twirled his long fair moustache; 'who could have imagined all this! She must have loved that old fellow after all.'

'In the light of a father, perhaps,' suggested Mr. Pyke Poole.

'Of course—you are right; how else could she have looked upon him. Her sorrow must be for her brother.'

'Perhaps both.'

'Who the devil are all those cads crossing the park?' exclaimed Sir Harry, with sudden anger, perhaps at his friend's mild suggestion.

'The coroner's inquest.'

The latter was 'a thundering bore' to Sir Harry, who was provoked to see 'a parcel of louts in half bullet hats' gaping about the Hall. However, the matter was soon over, permission was given for the interment, and, after unlimited brandies-and-sodas in the butler's premises, they all departed in high good-humour with themselves.

Lord Aberfeldie came to attend the funeral, and brought with him Olive to remain with Eveline. Lady Aberfeldie did not think the Hurdells 'good form,' so she remained, as yet, at Southsea.

Eveline's father and cousin were shocked by the expression of her face. Intense mental pain seemed written on her brow; and her eyes, if sunk and inflamed, seemed to have gathered much of intensity.

The stipulated number of days allowed by custom to elapse between the day of

death and that of interment were over, and the funeral too; Lord Aberfeldie, Sir Harry, Mr. Pyke Poole, and many others in scarfs and hatbands of wonderful length had departed with the remains for Slough-cum-Sloggit by train, and some of their carriages were now returning through the sunshiny park, where the soft rain was falling, and, as the clouds were breaking up, bright gleams of radiance danced along the sward.

Unused to death and unsympathetic, Lucretia Hurdell felt intense relief.

The great Tudor hall, with all its window blinds down and shrouded in silence and gloom, had seemed to her for all these days like one large sepulchre, though an odour of hothouse flowers was everywhere as the gardener brought all his treasures —hyacinths, waxen camelias, gardenia, faint Dijon roses, and so forth—to decor-

ate the corridor, the death-chamber, and the coffin, while, unconscious of all the mischief he had wrought, the bay hunter enjoyed his corn and beans as usual.

So the coffin was laid in 'the family vault,' where lay the first baronet of the House of Puddicombe and the first wife of Sir Paget.

'I shall never lie there,' thought Eveline, with a shudder, when her father, before returning to Southsea, gave her the final details,

Poor Sir Paget was gone, but no one seemed sad about it, and everyone seemed to grow bright now that he *was* gone finally. Sunshine and air came freely into the house through the open windows now, and the nameless hush that for days had pervaded the vicinity of the dead was no longer necessary. The decorous sadness that was acted, even in the servants'

hall, imposed by the presence of death—especially the death of a very rich man—was no longer required. The butler might whistle as he cleaned the plate, the housemaids might laugh freely now, and Mademoiselle Clairette indulge in a merry little French chauson unchecked by that rigid matron in black moire, the housekeeper.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YOUNG WIDOW.

So one of the closing scenes of a sudden tragedy had been acted in that fine old English manor-house, standing amid its richly-wooded chase, the undulating sward of which was of such a brilliant emerald that it reminded those who saw it that Hurdell Hall stood in the most fertile part of Hampshire.

When Sir Harry invited Sir Paget to visit him and join him in the fatal—as it eventually proved—cub-hunting, his object had been a nefarious one, but quite adapted to the tone of a *blasé* man about town

like himself, the hope of engaging the beautiful young wife of his elderly club friend in a very decided case of flirtation—so ignorant was he of Eveline's character, and how her ill-assorted marriage was brought about.

Now he hoped by a more honourable course to secure both her purse and person.

By will, however, it was soon known that Sir Paget, to prevent a younger successor enjoying any of his pelf through her, had stripped her of everything but what he had been compelled to settle upon her for life.

However, Sir Harry thought she was every way a most desirable widow to win, but her sorrow and sadness were a sore worry to Lucretia.

'Don't weep, dear,' she would say, in that hard, sharp tone peculiar to some

selfish women. 'It is the worst possible thing for one's eyes in every way.'

And, sooth to say, Miss Hurdell's cold, steely orbs did not seem even to have been much afflicted with the weakness of weeping.

'Ah—we all have our trials, dear Lady Puddicombe,' she resumed, after a pause. 'Do try to bear this patiently, and believe it all for—all for——'

'All for what?'

'Well—the best.'

'The best—how, Miss Hurdell?'

'Well—he was so old and you so young, don't you see,' replied this very matter-of-fact person.

Free—for whom and to what extent? Eveline never viewed the dispensation of Providence thus; but till Olive came with her soothing presence, every night amid the darkness of her room, the pent-up

tempest in her bosom—the tempest of unavailing regrets—would burst forth with loud whispers and sobs till sleep came, as it always did, at last.

Before Olive arrived, Lucretia was ever by the bed-side of her 'sweet Eveline,' sitting for hours together, putting Eau-de-Cologne on her handkerchiefs and Rimmel on her temples, arranging her pillow or her footstool if she left her couch for a chair, telling her stories of foreign life at Naples, Homburg, and Monaco, and so forth, for she believed that Eveline had been left with a splendid jointure, and a Scottish estate by a former lover; while Sir Harry lounged about impatiently in the stables and kennels, with his briar-root, and thinking 'when will all this end? And *how* can she go on as she does about that old pump?'

But a little time before Eveline had been

unconscious of any special blessedness in her life; *now*—with regard to the fate of her brother and Evan Cameron—it seemed as if the restoration of the past, even while encumbered with captious, fretful, and jealous old Sir Paget, would be worth years of happiness.

'Oh, my brother—my brother Allan? Were there not wicked people enough in the world to be taken, that you must be reft from us?'

And these words found a terrible echo in the heart of Olive. More weary and empty than ever did life look to both these girls. Everyone seemed to have some one to love them—some object in life to engross them—but neither of them had any now.

'If I could only die—if I could only die!' Eveline would murmur, as she tossed her sweet face and dishevelled hair on her

pillow, and thought of that grave in the desert, and betrayed a frame of mind beyond the conception of mundane Lucretia Hurdell.

And her mind would go back to the old days with all their brightness at Dundargue and in Mayfair, before Sir Paget came into the family picture, and when pleasure seemed all her thought and occupation, and care quite beyond her province!

And the girl lay there thinking—thinking—it was impossible for her not to think and surmise. But for this sudden accident, how long might Sir Paget have lived at his years; and how long would he have tormented her about Evan?

As if to infer that she desired his death, how often had he said in the bitterness of his heart, before the news of Cameron's fall in action came, that 'he would cheat her yet, and live as long as she could do!'

She was free now, and not past her girlhood; and, if in life, Evan would be loving her still. But she thrust that natural thought aside; why brood over it now, when Evan was no more, for somehow there seemed in it a species of treason to her dead husband—little as she had loved him—now that he too was in his grave.

If this was her mode of viewing Evan Cameron, how little chance had Sir Harry Hurdell of affecting her heart!

Now that Sir Paget was gone, Eveline repented that his last thoughts of her as a wife had been bitter, and tried to think of him as a friend who had been kind at one time, a husband whose settlements had been generous, and would have been greater but for the jealousy that made him alter his will.

She now recalled with something like

an emotion of pleasure, or certainly of satisfaction, that though she did not love, she had ever respected him, though his references to Evan Cameron had always made her wince and shiver.

'Poor man!' she exclaimed; 'and his soul went out into the night—in a moment—without time for a prayer or supplication to God!'

'So did the souls of our brave fellows at Tel-el-Kebir and elsewhere,' replied Olive, who had rather more metal in her composition than the softer Eveline.

Olive knew enough of life and of human nature to feel certain that her cousin was too young to relinquish all the hopes and fears, the many vague and brilliant dreams of girlhood. Another would come, but *who?*

Time would show that.

'She'll get over all this nonsense by-

and-by, poor little thing,' said Sir Harry to his chum, Pyke Poole, as they knocked the balls about in the billiard-room, trying canons and so forth for practice. 'She is, by Jove, the best groomed woman in the whole stud of our acquaintances—perfect in all her points. I'll go in for her, if I can—but it is too soon to begin the running yet. Girls' fancies are, however, easily drawn from one object to another.'

'And I don't think she could have fancied old Pudd much,' said Poole, as he mixed himself a glass of brandy-and-soda. 'I've seen many a rough spill in the field, but never such a devil of a cropper as he came!'

'You know I might do worse than marry such a sweet girl, Pyke?'

'You might, by Jingo!' replied Mr. Poole, with a knowing wink, and thinking —'Why should not he himself enter stakes for such a prize?'

'Puddicombe's settlements are splendid, I hear, but pass away if she dies without an heir. No chance of *that*, I think; and then some soft-headed Scotch fellow—if there is such a thing in the world—who loved her, has left her a place in the Highlands, where one could knock over the grouse and blackcock every year. We'll get married before the Derby. She'll have had plenty of time to air her grief and her weeds—Jay's "unutterable woe," no doubt—for old Pudd by that time. I've a heavy bet upon Dasher, and I'll have her in the grand stand on Cup Day, with my jockey's colours somewhere about her dress. She'll look, as she always does, a stunner!'

Poole could not help laughing as his friend ran on thus, in perfect confidence, and stroked his long yellow moustache. Though rather a bit of a reprobate, Sir

Harry looked every inch a gentleman, a long-limbed sanguine blond, alternately blunt and overbearing, resolute and indolent, with the general air of a man who has seen everything that was to be seen—done everything that was to be done, and 'had found nothing in it.'

'To speak to her for a space would never do. I'll take my time,' he resumed; 'none but a fool meets trouble half-way.'

She would learn to love him in time—hang it all, how could she resist! This comfortable impression made him feel quite easy on the subject, and by degrees the satisfaction that always accompanies a weak mind took possession of him.

Olive never doubted that when Eveline got over the death, not of Sir Paget, but of Evan Cameron, she would marry again. She was too young to treasure a morbid grief; but Olive would not like to have

seen her Lady of Hurdell Hall, for, with all a woman's sharp instincts, she had indefinable doubts about Sir Harry.

After Olive joined her, the two girls were never weary of comparing their hopeless notes and sorrows, and of searching the public prints. Eveline could do so freely and unchidden now for any further meagre tidings that might come of the lost one.

An unexpected and startling event—to be detailed in its place—*did* happen, and was duly recorded, but was unnoticed by them; and those who did see it, cared not to speak or write of it, while others were unaware of the deep and vital interest it possessed for them both.

'Dear Olive, but for you coming to me I think I might have lost my life—my reason—certainly my peace of mind—everything!' exclaimed the affectionate

and effusive Eveline, wreathing her soft white arms round her cousin's neck, and nestling her face therein.

The first day she was 'downstairs' was quite an event at Hurdell Hall, so great was the fuss made of her by the baronet and his sister.

In her dressing-room she had been fully attired in her crape dress by Clairette, who might as well have dressed a lay-figure for all the apparent power of volition there was in Eveline. Again and again she had tried to bathe her cheeks into some colour, to smooth her hair, and went with slow reluctant steps to the drawing-room at last; and there the extreme depth of her mourning, her girlish face and figure, and her pure whiteness of complexion—the soft white of the arum lily—made her delicate beauty seem more striking than ever.

Sir Harry was beside himself with pleasure, and when he rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner, and after all the champagne he had imbibed at table, his attention and extreme effusiveness were such that Eveline was compelled at last to say, coldly,

'Sir Harry, I wish you would go away and leave me—leave me to my own thoughts.'

He urged his extreme joy at seeing her again after her long seclusion.

Eveline had now a horror of Hurdell Hall. It was associated in her mind with three dire calamities—Evan's death—though she had first heard of that from Sir Harry in London; Sir Paget's terrible catastrophe, and, collaterally with it, the strange disappearance of her darling brother.

She must get away, without delay, she

thought, as the atmosphere of the place seemed to oppress her. So, in a few days, arrangements were complete for her departure to join her parents, who were still at Southsea.

Well, that was not a thousand miles from Hurdell Hall, thought Sir Harry; and it was too soon to venture on the subject of love or marriage yet; but a time would come, and a jolly one he doubted not it would be.

But, ere that time came, some very unforseen events had come to pass with reference to Eveline.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE DESERT.

Allan had heard of Private Thomas Keith, of the 72nd Highlanders, who, after being taken prisoner in Egypt in 1807, rose to the rank of Aga of the Mamelukes and Governor of Medina; but the prospects of promotion in the desert, held out to him by Zeid, did not prove very attractive; and here we may mention that the name of Zeid is of great antiquity, for it was that of the adopted son of Mohammed, whom he placed on the Black Stone of the Caaba, and to whom he gave a wife named Zinab.

Zeid's wife had already suggested that

Allan should have his head shaved, and that a turban or tarboosh should be substituted for his tropical helmet, with its red 42nd hackle; so he began to think that something must be done to put an end to this life of idleness and annoyance.

At times he thought he would affect to fall into the views of Zeid-el-Ourdeh; get the blood mare and put a burnous over his regimental jacket and kilt, and—leaving the 'Bedouin girl' out of the category—take an opportunity of trying the speed of the said mare, and escaping.

But the time for departing further into the desert drew near, and no mare was given him; he had, however, the offer of a camel, but that would not do at all.

He thought of the distress his disappearance must cause his family—if deemed dead, their sorrow; and ere long the deletion of his name from the army list, and

from his position in what he deemed a family regiment, and the whole complication of the situation maddened him.

In that Bedouin band were hundreds of dusky robbers with whom he had *not* eaten the mystic bread and salt of the East, and who owed him neither favour nor protection; and thus the grotesque views and oppressive friendship of Zeid might fail to secure his life at their hands.

He knew that they would think no more of killing him than of killing a kid, and he recalled with sufficient disgust the swift catastrophe of the wretched Holcroft.

When rambling on the skirts of the black tented camp, under close surveillance, however, Allan observed that the tomb of the Santon had a remarkably broad and peculiar cornice round its dome, that it was curved upward like the rim of

a billycock hat, and that a vine tendril of considerable strength had ascended, in the lapse of years, from the base to the summit of the dome; and thus he conceived, if he could ascend thereinto unseen, he might lie *en perdue*, till the tribe departed, and then he should be safe.

The day before the tents were to be struck, Zeid ordered some food to be procured by his huntsmen, who—though the food of the tribe was generally farinaceous—succeeded in capturing some of these gazelles that live in the open plain, where they browse upon the saline and pungent herbage.

Fully experienced in the haunts and habits of these animals, Abdallah and others concealed themselves in a hollow dug out of the sand and carefully covered over with brambles, and there they cap-

tured their prey by means of a rude network attached to stakes—the former being slightly concealed in the sand, and raised by means of a rope pulled when a number of the herd has ventured within its precincts. Thus twenty or thirty of these beautiful creatures, with their bright hazel eyes, spiral horns, and slender limbs were taken at a time.

The gun was used only when other means failed, as ammunition is too costly for ordinary occasions in obtaining the supplies of food. Allan, while hovering about the huntsmen, effected a final reconnaisance of the Santon's tomb, and resolved to make the attempt that very night.

When sudden darkness fell as usual, instantly after sunset, and no moon as yet had risen, while Zeid and his family were busy with their final ablutions and

prayers, Allan—his bold heart beating wildly the while—crept softly out of the tent, under the uplifted canvas wall thereof, and crawling flatly on his hands and knees, with the blade of his drawn sword in his teeth, began to leave the hated encampment behind him.

It was a time of keen and poignant excitement. Every moment he expected to hear an outcry announcing that he was missed from his place, or seen even amid the gloom and obscurity, by the keen eye of some practised son of the desert.

Fortunately all were at their prayers or engaged in preparations for departure on the morrow, and, as the distance increased between himself and the dark camp, his spirit began to rise, and he thought to himself, why had he not made this attempt before? But, sooth to say, it would have been impossible, as he was less

watched latterly than he had been at first.

Even at the distance of half-a-mile he did not assume an erect attitude, lest his figure might be seen between the sky and horizon, but continued to creep steadily on, till at last he ventured to rise from the ground, and strode swiftly towards the tomb of the Santon, which was about two miles from the camp.

The stars were coming out now, and a sigh of relief escaped him as he reached it —a sigh that ended in an exclamation of dismay as a tall Bedouin, who seemed to spring from the ground, so sudden was his appearance, stood face to face with him, and in a moment he recognised Abdallah, the second in command under Zeid!

He perceived Allan's sword in his hand, and, knowing that he was escaping, drew a pistol from his girdle—a pistol the ex-

plosion of which would have proved most disastrous, but by one trenchant stroke Allan hewed the Arab's left hand off by the wrist, and hand and pistol fell on the sand together.

Muttering a terrible malediction, the Bedouin, wrapping the bleeding stump in the folds of his burnous, furiously assailed Allan with his formidable sabre, shouting, as he did so, something to this purpose:—

'Unbelieving wretch, you shall go from hence to hell, where your hands will be chained to your neck, and you will be compelled to oppose your face to the flames.'

'Oho!' thought Allan, 'the Koran again!'

If he had time or means to give an alarm, all would be over.

It was a life for a life now, and both men fought desperately; both were expert swordsmen, and both were filled with

blackest fury—the Bedouin by the agony of his wound, and Allan by the peril which menaced him.

After pausing to draw breath for a moment, Abdallah came rushing on with blind rage ; Allan warded a cut, and, closing in, caught his sword-hand by the wrist and held it with an iron grasp ; then, adroitly dropping the basket hilt of the claymore from his right hand, he caught the shortened blade and plunged it, dagger fashion, into the breast of the Arab, who fell at his feet and expired.

Inspired by an instant thought, he dragged the dead body away, and the hand and pistol also, to some distance from the vicinity of the tomb, and, returning, proceeded stealthily and speedily, if worn, breathless, and feeling rather sick by his recent work, to climb by the branches of the vine up the wall of the

circular edifice, and over its heavily curved cornice, behind which he crouched down flat, and there he lay for hours, exposed to a shower of rain, the fall of which he hailed with thankfulness, as it would obliterate any traces of blood in his vicinity, and also his footmarks from the bruised branches of the vine which he had used as a ladder.

He knew that, if retaken now, the discovery of Abdallah's fate would seal his own; so, if found, nothing was left him but to die sword in hand.

Each respiration came heavily, as he lay there listening for every passing sound, and wondering how he had achieved the first chapter of his escape, and all the bloody and necessary work so well.

Strange it was that his hand should avenge the miserable Holcroft; but he did not think of that till afterwards; nor did

he think of the too baleful effect the wet and damp of the Egyptian night might have upon his own health.

At length the rain ceased, and the blue dome of heaven appeared in all its wondrous beauty—for wondrous indeed it is by the shores of the Nile, though this was in the first season of the Egyptian year, when the weather is generally moist.

But the sky is so cloudless, and the brightness of the moon so intense, that the natives, when sleeping in the open air, as they often do, cover their eyes, as the effect of the moon's rays upon the sight is more dangerous and violent than that of the sun.

No sleep, however, visited the eyes of Allan that night; he remained without desire to close them, preternaturally, acutely, and painfully awake, and watchful as a lynx.

It was all as Allan anticipated. Day had scarcely dawned, and the striking of the tents begun, ere he was conscious that his absence was discovered, and more than a hundred swiftly-mounted horsemen, with cries and shouts, darted from the camp in every direction around it in search, and, if afoot, he must inevitably have been overtaken; but, concealed where he was, he lay in safety, though his heart throbbed so violently that he seemed to hear its pulsations, as he heard the Bedouins, at full speed, pass and repass the Santon's tomb, with guns and rifles unslung, intent on his recapture and destruction.

He clenched the hilt of his claymore. If traced to where he lay—if discovered—he could but sell his life, and dearly did he resolve to do so!

He heard their voices, their surmises,

their suggestions, and their threats; and lucky it was for him that the rain and subsequently the heavy dew, of the past night had obliterated the traces of his footsteps near the tomb and on the tendrils of the vine, also the traces of the blood of Abdallah, the discovery of whose body was greeted by yells of rage that pierced the air; but the rain and the dew were ere long to have a baleful effect on Allan in the time to come.

At last the riders seemed to give up the search as hopeless, and by twos and threes came slowly back to camp, with horses weary and bridles loose. After mid-day, the tents were finally struck, stowed away, with all household utensils, on the backs of camels and horses, and the whole tribe of Zeid-el-Ourdeh took its departure in a north-easterly direction, towards the great desert, through which

lies the route taken by Bonaparte in 1799, and, before evening fell, the last of them, like black specks, were alone visible, and ere long they quite disappeared from view.

Now Allan, worn and weary, after a day without food or drink, slept for a time, and the moon, clear, bright, and refulgent, was high in the heavens when he prepared to descend from his lurking place.

He looked keenly, anxiously, and carefully round him, as it was possible that some of the Bedouins might return to their late camping-ground for some object of their own; and, moreover, others were to be avoided quite as much as they.

No living thing was visible, and the most awful silence seemed to reign around him.

Allan descended from his perch, stiff, benumbed, and well-nigh powerless, to

begin his lonely and perilous journey; but whither?

Ignorant of the country and of the way to pursue, he knew not that the canal which leads from Belbeis to Grand Cairo lay on his left; and after toiling on without adventure for a few days and nights, subsisting on dates, wild-beans, and lotus-roots, with a little water from an occasional spring, he found himself, weary, worn, and faint, with pains in his head and loins, and shivering in his limbs—the forerunners of a deadly illness—crossing what is the camel-route to Suez, as he penetrated into another portion of the desert.

He saw occasionally vultures, storks, and pelicans; and now and then a herd of beautiful antelopes swept past him; but—as he thanked heaven—no Bedouins. More than once he came upon nitre

springing up in the sandy waste, like crystallised fruit. At times these spots seemed as if overgrown by moss and coated with hoar frost—hoar frost under a fervid Egyptian sun; and according to the quantity of the nitre, their fantastic shapes were either a dazzling white, or more or less tinted by the yellow hue of the sand.

More than once in his fitful slumbers by night under the baleful dew, there came before him in a dream the agony of his lurking on the summit of the tomb in momentary dread of discovery, and then he was again closing in combat hand-in-hand with Abdallah, the aspect of whose dark face, with gleaming eyes and glistening teeth, curiously blended with an idea of Holcroft, came vividly before him; and then, when just in the act of plunging in his shortened sword-blade, he would awake

with a nervous start to find himself still in solitude with quiet stars looking down upon him.

At last when about to sink he saw before him the well-known fringes of greenery and foliage that indicate the line of a canal, and it proved to be a portion of that of Moses, and a cry of joy escaped him when he heard the whistle of a locomotive and saw the welcome smoke of a train running westward.

How much the sound and sight we deem alike so hideous spoke to his heart of home, of ease, of peace, safety, and civilisation. In short, he soon discovered that he was midway between Kassassin and Mahsameh and by a liberal promise of *backsheesh* to an Egyptian labourer whom he met, and whose assistance he solicited, he reached a railway station and obtained all the succour he needed from the European officials there.

By them he was placed in a train for Ismailia, and ere long he saw once more those places which were familiar to him as having passed them with the troops—Ramses, Tel-el-Mahuta, and El-Magfar, where the Black Watch had encamped, and where he had befriended Zeid-el-Ourdeh; and ere long he could recognise, when he had left the sea of sand behind him, the white-walled houses of Ismailia against the deep blue of the sky, and the tall forest of masts, those of our transports and war-ships in the adjoining lake of Timsah.

He had no recollection of more, or even of reaching the railway station. His heart beat wildly, his head swam round him, and a darkness seemed to envelop him. He had fainted.

On partially recovering he found himself in bed, but he knew not where, and dimly seen, as in a glass, he thought he

saw Evan Cameron bending over him—Evan looking pale and wan as when he buried him in the sand.

'Oh, God,' sighed Allan, as he closed his eyes to shut the vision out, 'is this madness or delirium that has come upon me?'

CHAPTER XVI.

EASTWARD HO!

Lady Aberfeldie was a Scottish Episcopalian of the first class; one whose boast it was that she always distinguished Christmas and Easter by mince-pies and cheesecakes; and who rather looked down on English Ritualists and Tractarians as 'second chop;' and who never saw a Michaelmas without its goose; but she forgot the Michaelmas of this year, and with good reason too.

The sudden arrival in the hospital at Ismailia of Captain Graham, the missing officer of the Black Watch, who had been carried off by Bedouins at Matarieh, and

who was supposed to have shared the terrible fate of Professor Palmer and his companions, was duly 'wired' home, like many other items of Egyptian news, and caused no small excitement among the inmates of Puddicombe Villa, Southsea. The telegram added that he was without a wound, but was supposed to be dying of enteric fever, the result of all he had undergone when in the desert.

'Dying!' exclaimed his mother, pale as a lily; 'oh, it cannot be.'

And Olive looked the picture of mute misery.

Lord Aberfeldie telegraphed to the chief of the medical staff at Ismailia for distinct intelligence, and the reply—waited for with intense anxiety—came in its usual orange-tinted envelope.

'Not dying yet, but recovery very improbable.'

Lord Aberfeldie, with the promptitude of an old soldier, and full of affection and anxiety, wished to start at once for Egypt, and alone; but the three ladies of his family insisted on going also, so he yielded to their tears, entreaties, and importunities —especially those of Olive, whose misery was very great; and he had much sympathy with a young and loving heart. 'Let no one decry the suffering of the young because they are young,' says a writer; as we grow older we get used to pain, both mental and bodily.

Olive passed the hours, previous to departure, pretty much as we do those which precede a funeral; everything was done as a duty, dressing, undressing, sitting down to meals, and so forth—seeming to have no interest in anything, as if for the time, life and all its interests was over and done with.

'Oh, Eveline,' she exclaimed, 'what advantages men have over us in this world.'

'Of course they have,' replied her cousin, 'but to what do you refer in the present instance?'

'Now, if we were men, we could start for Egypt alone; as it is, we can only go with your papa.'

'If you were a man, Olive, you would not think of going at all.'

'Indeed—why?'

'Little goose! If a man, would you be engaged to Allan? Are you going to become an advocate for women's "rights"—whatever they may be?'

'No—but it is tiresome to have to run in the grooves of life that men lay down for us. Poor creatures, we are only in their eyes the weaker vessels after all.'

'But weaker vessels they make a great fuss with; but how we chatter! Oh,

heavens, if Allan's peril—dear, dear Allan —should be so great !'

Olive shivered at this exclamation, as she alternated—like all girls of a delicate and nervous organization—between high spirits at the prospect of going eastward and the awful dread of what tidings *might* await her there.

'Going to the East—actually to Egypt ! Darling papa, how shall we ever be able to thank you ?' exclaimed Eveline, as in her energy she locked her slender fingers so tightly together that the great diamond in one of her rings—a gift of Sir Paget—was cutting into her delicate skin, and yet she felt it not.

And great was the disgust of Sir Harry Hurdell, when eventually he heard of this sudden disposition to travel, the precise object of which he failed quite to understand.

Apart from anxiety about her brother, Eveline had another thought, and she kept repeating to herself,

'I shall see the land where Evan died—the land that holds his grave! It is a pilgrimage of love—but one that is without deceit to him.'

'Him,' meant Sir Paget, or 'Old Pudd,' as Sir Harry called him.

Allan might die ere they arrived, or after they did so. In either case, the famous will of Olive's father would be as only so much waste paper, so far as the Aberfeldie family was concerned; but at this time of trial no one thought of that feature in the terrible contingency.

Their whole idea was to see him; to be with him; to know the best or worst; to nurse him well, and to bring him home with them to the soft breezes of the Sidlaw Hills, and his native place, Dundargue.

So Tappleton and Mademoiselle Clairette received their orders; packing was proceeded with; the Continental Bradshaw consulted, and all arrangements made for a speedy departure for Egypt, *viâ* Paris; by rail then to Marseilles; thence by steamer, Messageries Imperiales Company, to Alexandria, when the train could be taken for Suez.

The night before their departure Olive was so excited that she could not go to bed, but sat listening to the booming of the waves as they rolled on the stormy bluffs of Southsea Castle, while all the past returned upon her, and when she had last seen the face of Allan.

As she was heard moving about in her room, Clairette was sent to inquire for her.

'I have a dreadful head-ache,' said Olive.

'Mon Dieu, mademoiselle, why are you not in bed, instead of shivering there in your night-dress, at an open window, too! This will never do; let me coil up your hair and cover you up.'

'Dear little Clairette, I shall be good and go to bed—yes, to bed.'

Clairette, who knew all about it, kissed her lady's hand; but Olive pressed her lips to the cheek of the French girl, who, in the impulsiveness of her nature, burst into tears, and then, instead of leaving her mistress to repose, had a long gossip with her about Allan, for whose safety she said she gave up a prayer every night.

Appliances for travel are so great and ample now that a few hours after soon saw the whole party on board the Marseilles steamer, and traversing the Mediterranean.

Many officers were in the saloon making

their way to join the various regiments, and to these Eveline—so young a widow —was an object of no small interest. She seemed to have ripened into the bloom of early womanhood, though all her girlish manner remained with its softness and grace.

Her figure had become more rounded and developed ; her step was firm, though elastic as ever; and she carried her head with an air of stateliness that was somewhat belied by the occasional sadness of her expression and lassitude of demeanour.

To her and to Olive, ever-recurring was the thought, when fairly off the coast of Egypt, how strange it was from the steamer's poop to look upon those places of which they had read so much of late in the newspapers—Alexandria, Suez, Port Saïd, and so forth—all 'household words' at home now.

At the first-named place they saw ample traces of the terrible bombardment, with the details of which they were more familiar than with those of its marble palaces and porphyry temples of the times of old; or of the golden coffin of its young hero, who emulated being a god; of its streets, two thousand feet in width; and its Pharos, whose mirrors of polished steel reflected from afar the galleys of Cleopatra.

Suez, with its mosques and caravansaries, its houses of sun-bricks, amid, or rather bordering on, a desert of rock, slightly covered with sand, and where trees, gardens, and meadows are almost entirely unknown, was soon left behind as the train bore them on by Shalouffe, Geneffe, Faid, Serapium, and Nefishe, to Ismailia, so named after Ismail Pasha, and which deems itself the most aristocratic or respectable place upon the canal, as

the Khedive erected a palace for himself at the east end of it, and the houses have all a substantial appearance, with neat and trim gardens ; and the appearance of its harbour reminded Lord Aberfeldie of that of Balaclava in the time of the Crimean war ; and still the Lake of Timsah was crowded with vessels of all sorts and sizes.

Despite the deep and keen interest of the matter nearest their hearts—the object which had brought them so far from home —it was impossible for Olive and Eveline not to be occasionally drawn from their own thoughts, and impressed by the novelty of the new sights, scenes, and certain memories of the land they looked on, for the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel took place somewhere near where Ismailia stands, and certain it is that, at no great distance therefrom, it

was at El-Khantara-el-Khazneh, the Virgin Mother and the Holy Child passed when Joseph arose by night 'and departed into Egypt.'

The wide lake looked now like a land-locked harbour crowded with shipping. Great steamers, magnificent 'troopers,' all painted white, colossal men-of-war lay like leviathans there, while gunboats, launches, and steam-tugs were for ever shooting to and fro.

In the streets invalid soldiers of every kind, in tattered *karkee* uniforms or red serges, Guardsmen, Highlanders, Dragoons, Artillery, and Rifles, were creeping about, some propped on sticks and crutches, awaiting their transmission home; and there, too, might be seen, occasionally, stalwart Bedouins, dirty Jews, and sable negroes, howling Dervishes, and many breeds of Arabs, Italians, and Frenchmen;

the Turk, with his smart scarlet fez; the Egyptian, with tarboosh and a turban twisted round it; and in some instances Moors, with embroidered jackets, white turban, crimson sash, and trousered to the knee, with yellow shoes, a scimitar and antique gun of enormous length; and though last, not least, the English Jack-tar, rollicking about and eyeing curiously the closely-veiled women.

The novelty of these sights and scenes in the minds of Olive and Eveline became merged at last, especially when they saw our wounded redcoats and bluejackets, in absorption about Allan, who, dead or alive, was then in that place, Ismailia.

And, in dread of the tidings that might await her, Olive already began to pray and wrestle, as it were, with anticipated despair and dread of how Allan, if in life, might

receive her. Until *now* this idea had never occurred to her.

'Oh, my lost love—my lost love!' she whispered to herself; 'what shall I say or do to convince you that I love you, and you only? If gone—oh, my God!—no, no, *no*—but if gone, I cannot call you back to me—and I cannot go to you. In another hour we shall know all—all!'

Aware, as an old Crimean campaigner, that shocking scenes might meet their eyes in the vicinity of a military hospital, Lord Aberfeldie took the three ladies of his party to the chief hotel, and then, with a heart full of the liveliest anxiety, set forth to make inquiries about Allan, to whom we shall now return.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT ISMAILIA.

The putrid water he had drunk on many occasions, the stone-fruit on which he had been compelled to feed, the damp sand on which he had lain under the night dews—the watching, fatigue, and depression of spirits he had undergone—had served to prostrate Allan now, and even his magnificent constitution failed to resist such a combination of evils.

At times he was in a burning fever; at others in cold, shivering fits, as if his limbs would go to pieces. These were succeeded by feeble listlessness and indif-

ference to all around him, and then he seemed as if about to die.

He first became quite conscious of where he was on being roused from a species of waking dose by voices near him.

'Captain,' said an Irish Fusilier, one of Sir Garnet's own, 'I want ten shillings from you.'

'For what purpose?' asked the officer, sharply.

'To bury my brother.'

'Bury your brother, d—n it! I gave you ten shillings for that purpose two days ago.'

'To bury his leg that was, your honour.'

'Well!'

'And now I want another ten shillings to bury the rest of him.'

'Have you a non-commissioned officer with you?'

'Yes, sir—Sergeant Carey.'

'Well, you and Sergeant Carey had better be off, or I'll make the place too hot for you. As for your brother, you can bury him for nothing beside the tent-pegs outside.'

Every other morning some poor fellow was reported as dead in the wards, and they were buried in a little strip of ground near the canal, a tent-peg, with a label fluttering from it, alone indicated, in the meantime, the name and rank of the deceased.

As Allan glanced around him, he saw cheeks that were pale, eyes that were sunk, and forms emaciated by wounds, loss of blood, and fever like his own of the worst enteric form.

A somewhat oppressive odour of hot soup and poultices seemed to pervade the wards of the hastily improvised hospital, where, though wounds were dressed on

Lister's antiseptic system, with a care and minuteness never before seen on a large scale in war, yet it was reported, and with justice, in the public prints, that through the meanness, economy, and incapacity of the Government, or the Government officials, 'the enormous hospital at Ismailia was opened without drugs, instruments, provisions, or stores, and was unable to supply the front with any medical essentials, and that there was also an extraordinary lack of hospital attendants. Officers who lay in the wards tell stories which are ludicrous though painful, of neglect and want of common food. All acknowledged themselves grateful for the kindness, sympathy, and skill of the doctors. The fault was not theirs; but *red-tape* finished what *incompetence* began.'

As Allan looked around him, a familiar figure in the undress uniform of the

Black Watch caught his eye—it was that of an officer conversing in a low voice with one of the staff-surgeons, and he gave a nervous start as he muttered and closed his eyes.

'It is a chance likeness, and the world is full of chance likenesses.'

He looked again; the figure—the man was still there, and he could see his full face now, with its light brown moustache and head of close-clipped golden hair.

'Great heavens, it is a day-dream of Evan Cameron!' said Allan to himself in a whisper.

The blood in his veins seemed to congeal or to circulate like water that was icy cold. He had heard that we cannot look upon the supernatural and live, and so Allan believed that his hour had come.

Feeling that it might be only a powerful but optical illusion, he continued to gaze

at the figure with incredulity and awful dread.

'Cameron!'

The name escaped him, while a strange sensation crept over Allan, and his voice as he spoke sounded thick in his own ears.

But it was no optical illusion—no disembodied spirit he saw, as he thought he had done before, but his friend and comrade still in the body, but pale now and barely convalescent after the dreadful wound he had received.

He grasped the hand of Allan, and laughed at the mingled expression of blank amazement and dismay he read there, emotions which were gradually replaced by those of satisfaction and delight.

'I was supposed to be dead and buried in the sand, like Lieutenant O'Brien in

"Peter Simple," but, unlike Lieutenant O'Brien, I was not discovered by a pretty girl treading on my nose,' said Cameron, laughing, and in reply to some inarticulate words of Allan, on the side of whose bed he seated himself.

'Tell me—tell me about it,' said Allan, huskily.

'You could scarcely have left me ere I began to recover from the syncope—for a syncope it was—only you and Sergeant Farquharson were not doctors enough to discover that it was so. A sense of suffocation made me struggle up and throw off my blanket and the covering of light sand in which you had so kindly tucked me; and as the blanket fell from my face the dew refreshed me, and I perceived in a moment the fatal mistake into which you had all fallen. Dark though it was, the detachment was still in sight, and I could

hear your voices; I tried to call out, but lacked the power to do so, and a horror fell upon me, with insensibility after a time, and, when I recovered, I found a group of mounted Bedouins gazing at me in stupid wonder to see a living man half buried in the sand.'

'But how was it that we totally failed to find all trace of the spot where we interred you?'

'How strange the question sounds as you frame it,' said Cameron, smiling. 'A sandstorm came on, and must have obliterated the landmarks.'

'We heard shots as we fell back.'

'The Bedouins fired at something—I know not what. They proved to belong to a friendly tribe—Bedouins of that kind who become petty merchants wandering over the country, trading in such goods as they can easily transport from place to

place, and fortunate—most fortunate—was it for me that I fell just then into the hands of men so peacefully disposed.'

'And your wound?'

'Is healing fast, thank Heaven! They carefully redressed it, put me in a camel litter, and conveyed me to Abu Zabel on the canal, from whence I was sent, with others here, by boat to Ismailia on sick-leave for home. I heard of your having been carried off at Matarieh; some of our fellows who are in the wards told me so; but I was powerless to attempt your discovery in any way—too feeble almost to think, but the idea of your peril and too probably helpless butchery cut me to the heart.'

'Any news from home?'

'Home?' repeated Cameron.

'I mean of my people.'

'None, Allan, how should I hear of them?'

'True,' said Allan, wearily and sadly, and in the miserable weakness of his body, as a paroxysm of shivering came over him, almost doubting the evidence of his own senses.

Hawke Holcroft had turned up in the camp of Zeid-el-Qurdeh—that was startling enough in all conscience; but that Evan Cameron, whom he and Sergeant Farquharson had so regretfully buried in the sandy grave—the grave of which no trace could be found—should be alive, well, and chatting with him there, and manipulating a cigar, outheroded fiction!

The wonderful reappearance of the supposed dead Cameron was the intelligence in the papers which Olive Raymond and Eveline did *not* see.

Little could Cameron imagine that Eveline was so near to him as she was then!

Often had he dreamt of her face—not

when he longed to do so, but when visions of it came upon him unbidden while he lay asleep on the deck of the transport, in the bivouacs in the desert, amid the wards of the hospital at Ismailia and elsewhere, and it always came before him with a sweetness, a loving expression, and a strange spiritual charm impossible to define or describe.

After the mutual revelations of the two friends, the intermittent fever of Allan seemed to become more deadly, and by the time that Lord Aberfeldie arrived at the hospital he almost failed to recognise his son, so much had the latter sunk; for, the temporary excitement consequent to the meeting with Cameron having subsided, Allan's health seemed visibly to retrograde, and each fit of shivering rendered him weaker than the last.

A staff-surgeon had prepared Allan for the visit of his father, who was manifestly

shocked when he saw how prostrate he was, and, as they pressed each other's hands, Lord Aberfeldie perceived how thin, bony, and wasted those of his son had become.

'My poor boy,' he exclaimed; 'how is this I find you?'

'Not dying, father, but very near it, I fear,' replied Allan, with a sickly smile.

Lord Aberfeldie gazed lovingly and sadly into his son's wasted face, and thought of all his mother, his sister, and Olive would feel on seeing him thus, and in such a squalid place.

Amid the suffering and misery they were enduring, Lord Aberfeldie thought it strange to hear many expressing regret that the war was over so soon, and 'Arabi snuffed out.'

The realisation of Sir Garnet Wolseley's confident prediction that all would be ended by the 16th of September, put an abrupt

and speedy end to all chances of promotion and glory, and now everyone thought only of going home as fast as possible.

In the huge improvised military hospital much existed, as in every such place, that proved rather repugnant to the ideas of a fastidious man, so Lord Aberfeldie resolved upon having Allan removed to another place—a hotel or villa—whither, when the surgeon would permit it, he would have him conveyed by soldiers in a dhooley; and, full of this purpose, he rejoined the ladies, who awaited his return with the keenest anxiety.

His hopes of Allan's recovery proved balm to their hearts, though he spoke more confidently of it than his own observations warranted.

At the story of Cameron, Eveline sprang from her seat, while a little gasping cry escaped her, and Lord Aberfeldie was

rather sorry to see her mother's face darken.

'Evan Cameron—Evan Cameron alive!' exclaimed Lady Aberfeldie, incredulously.

'Alive, and well! Old Stratherroch, his father, used to say that the men of the Black Watch were deuced hard to kill, and, by Jove! he was right. For the old man's sake, I am glad that God has spared the boy!'

Unable to realise the situation, poor Eveline felt stupefied!

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

Olive heard all her uncle had to relate of the condition in which he found Allan, and, stealing away, she assumed her hat and sunshade, and, accompanied by Clairette, undeterred by any risks she might run in a strange place, issued into the somewhat European-looking streets of Ismailia, over which she could see the great palace of the Khedive looming in the distance, about two miles off; and obtaining the guidance of a passing soldier—a Seaforth Highlander—she bent her steps direct to the military hospital.

In the depth of her love, in the keenness of her anxiety—her remorse, too, for all she had, in some sense unwittingly, made Allan endure—she cast the idea of strict propriety and the amenities of society to the winds, and, following the generous impulses of her own heart, resolved to see Allan, if she could, without delay.

She passed the temporary burying-ground, with its rows of labelled tent-pegs, without a shudder, as she knew not what lay there; anon past wards where lay patients suffering from sunstroke and ophthalmia, as she could see by the sufferers wearing blue-veils and dark glasses, till she was ushered into a species of office, where a staff-surgeon in undress uniform greeted her with some surprise and *empressement*.

He had not seen an English girl—

especially one of Olive's style and beauty —for a considerable time past, perhaps, and he looked with genuine interest on Olive, her half-opened mouth, her soft, earnest eyes, her trembling lips, and the tears that clung to her long lashes.

Shyly she asked if it were possible to see Captain Graham, of the Black Watch, who was a patient.

He smiled, and shook his head.

'Do permit me, sir,' she asked, with half-clasped hands and her eyes full of entreaty.

'Do be reasonable, Miss—Raymond,' said he, glancing at her card, which an orderly had given him. 'Your presence would but excite him too much. It will be folly on your part to undo all our precautions simply from a mere desire, however natural, to speak with or see Captain Graham.'

'Oh, sir, if you knew all!'

'All that can be done for him is being done. Besides, there is danger in being near him.'

'Danger!'

'To you.'

'I care not. Why?'

'Enteric fever takes a typhoid form at times.'

'Fear not for me—I am his cousin—his promised wife!' urged Olive, piteously.

'Come with me, then, but softly; this way,' said the surgeon, and, taking her hand, he led her across a corridor, where hospital orderlies, men of the Army Hospital Corps, nurses, and others were hovering, and where Olive narrowly escaped the shock of seeing a fever-stricken and attenuated corpse carried out, and into a plain, white-washed room, where on a camp-bed—one of those brought

from Arabi's camp—Allan lay asleep.

Olive, in obedience to a mute sign from the doctor, made no nearer approach, or attempt to touch or wake him, but she restrained her heavy sobs with difficulty, for the sight of how wan and worn, hollow-cheeked and pale he was, and how every way wasted, wrung her loving heart to the core.

Kneeling down by his bedside, she lightly touched with her lips his thin white hand that lay upon the coverlit, a mute action which, in one so charming as she looked, stirred even the heart of the staff-surgeon, and then she stole softly away.

'Is there any hope?' she asked, in a choking voice.

As the doctor did not speak, she looked in his face and seemed to see her answer there.

'He cannot recover, you fear?' said she.

'I fear not, Miss Raymond,' said the doctor, in a low voice.

She leant for a moment against the table, and felt giddy.

Then, bowing to the staff-surgeon, she drew her veil close over her face, took the arm of Clairette to steady her footsteps, and quitted the sad place in a tumult of grief and horror.

Night came on—the hot Egyptian night—and Allan as he tossed restlessly on his pillow, all unconscious of *who* had visited him, as he looked wearily round his bare and strange-like apartment by the subdued light of a shaded lamp, pondered doubtfully whether it had been a dream or a reality that he had that forenoon spoken with and seen his father, Lord Aberfeldie, and, in the weakness and confusion of his mind, he was somewhat inclined to

think the whole thing was the effect of fevered fancy.

Ere long Olive was to have him all to herself!

In a beautiful little villa near the Lake of Timsah—one built for the famous Toulba Pasha, the friend of Arabi—in view of all the fleet that lay anchored there, Allan, after a little time, found himself in a luxurious apartment, furnished in European style, yet fitted up and decorated in the Egyptian manner, with gaily-painted arabesques.

The windows opened upon an arcaded verandah, the slender pillars of which were rose-coloured marble, with quaint capitals of purest alabaster, from which sprung horse-shoe arches elaborately carved and inscribed with verses from the Koran.

Palm-trees, feathery-branched bananas, and arched rows of orange-trees shaded the lovely garden walks, all mosaic with polished pebbles; and there, amid the rose-trees and beds of tulip bordered by myrtle, a white marble fountain spouted, the very plash of its ceaselessly falling water seeming to cool the heated air; and, in view of all this, Allan Graham lay on his couch in the care of his mother and sister, but more often with Olive alone, for she had constituted herself by right his nurse, and ere long Eveline found a sufficient occupation for herself. How, the reader may guess.

As for Allan and Olive, their reconciliation came speedily about, as such things never take long in real life if they are to take place at all; and the few minutes that followed are not very describable, as they remained, hand clasped in hand, in silence

but with a happiness and content that were inexpressible,—'one of those rare periods in life when we forget our mortality and believe that heaven has begun for us.'

At first Allan, fearful of some infectious nature in his ailment, had implored Olive to leave him.

'Go—go, Olive!' he exclaimed, faintly; 'do not come near me.'

'You dislike me so—so much?' said Olive, more faintly still.

'Oh, no, oh, no—not that, not that, when I now know all.'

'Why then, Allan?'

'Because all the doctors tell me that there is something typhoid in this Egyptian enteric fever, and if it were to affect you——'

'Allan!' she exclaimed, reproachfully; and, pressing her lips to his, added, 'if you die, let me die too.'

'Olive!'

'Do you doubt me now?'

'Oh, no—oh, no, my darling; but do leave me.'

'Why?'

'Because this sick-room is no place for you.'

But Olive in the depth of her love was resolute, and kept her place as a watcher by his pillow, and day after day, with only short intervals of rest, was she there unvaryingly; and as she bent over Allan's sick-bed she felt how true it is that 'all the forces of our nature rush towards the channels of pity, of patience, and of love, and sweep down the choking drift of our quarrels, our debates, our would-be wisdom, and our clamorous, selfish desires.'

Allan's life was for a time hovering in the balance, and Olive, as she sat by his pillow looking out on the Lake of Timsah,

recalled the pleasant days of their childhood at Dundargue, where they had plaited rushes beside the trouting stream, and he had garlanded her hair with scarlet poppies and yellow cowslips, and he used to call her his little queen and wifie, while the great clouds cast their flying shadows over the green Sidlaw hills and the bonnie Carse of Gowrie.

'Days gone beyond recall, save in memory!'

But, when she feared he might be going out from her sight for ever, her heart grew cold and seemed to die within her.

She watched him when he lay motionless and asleep, when his irregular breathing stirred his sunburned throat and broad chest, when the perspiration of fever rolled in globules over his forehead, and when the cold shivering of the ague followed, till by watching and confinement her cheek grew pale as Allan's.

There was always a profound and oppressive stillness about the house and room. She heard no sound but his breathing and the ticking of a French clock upon a console table.

Her hand it was that was ever ready to give the compounded drinks the doctor ordered, and when ere long he became convalescent, to her joy, she accompanied him in his drives around Ismailia, to Nefische and Serapium, and along the banks of the Great Bitter Lake, where the lofty white Indian 'troopers' could be seen under steam, and boats like those that are to be seen on the Nile at Cairo in hundreds—elegant barques with long sail-yards and fantastic canvas that fly with wonderful velocity, and are so ingeniously carved and painted, fitted up with carpeted cabins, and deck awnings of brilliant colours as a protection from the heat.

So the days stole on, and, as Allan's fever seemed to pass away, he and Olive became supremely happy—she all the more so that she had been his chief nurse. 'Nothing,' says a writer, 'tones down a young girl's passion into apparent friendship like nursing the man she loves in illness. Of course it is there, ready to break out with the old strength hereafter; but for the time the sense of utter weakness on his side, of protection on hers—the perfect unquestioned familiarity, the constant companionship—have done away with all the old reserve, and doubt, and mystery which to unsophisticated young women is the very food of love.'

We have said that while all this was in progress Eveline had found an occupation for herself.

It was very natural that Evan Cameron should call at the villa by the Lake of

Timsah to inquire for his friend and comrade, and it was also natural that he should meet, incidentally, Lady Puddicombe, which event came to pass on the very day that Lord and Lady Aberfeldie had taken the train to Grand Cairo, to be present at the St. Andrew Festival, held by the Highland Brigade in the magnificent restaurant in the Ezeb Keyah Gardens.

Evan was suddenly ushered in upon her by old Mr. Tappleton, the butler, who had charge of the household at Ismailia, and whose rubicund face became quite radiant when he saw the familiar uniform of the Black Watch.

A little cap of snowy white lace rested on her soft brown hair; all the rich beauty promised but a short time ago had been amply fulfilled, amid the sorrow she had endured, or in the dignity of her girlish widowhood.

A film seemed to pass over Evan's handsome eyes; a tremulous sensation, hitherto unknown, seemed to thrill over his nerves, and he was for a moment more full of emotion than herself; but he did not, as she expected, hasten to take her in his arms.

'Lady Puddicombe!' he exclaimed, while playing irresolutely with the red hackle in his tropical helmet.

'I am not the wife of Sir Paget now,' said Eveline, sweetly and simply.

'What then?'

'His widow. Is it possible you did not know?'

'He is—dead then!'

'Yes, Evan—killed by a fall from a horse. I am in weeds, don't you see?'

And, if a tearless, a very peerless little widow she looked.

Then a half-stifled cry escaped her as

she fell upon his breast, and her white hands groped feebly, as one might do in the dark, about his shoulders, as her arms sought to go round his neck. In her crape dress she seemed to appeal to him and to his tenderness, more eloquently than she had ever done in the past time, and he gazed into her delicate face, as he took it caressingly between his hands, with a growing intensity that showed how he had hungered for the sight of it.

The first strong tide of emotion swept over that parted pair, meeting now so differently from how they had ever expected to meet again.

In the intensity of her joy, Eveline had closed her eyes, as if the light of day had proved too much for them; then their long lashes began to quiver, the lids unclosed, and the dear eyes were again turned wonderingly, searchingly, and lovingly on Evan Cameron's face.

She was *free.*

His pulses quickened at the thought. He had never ceased to love her—never ceased to wish she should be his. Sir Paget was dead—dead as Julius Cæsar—and he, Evan Cameron, had been in possession of a treasure without knowing it—the free and unfettered love of Eveline!

'Dead fires are difficult to re-light,' said she, waggishly, while twirling the ends of his moustache with her fairy fingers.

'But, Eveline, with me the fire was never dead—as I loved you with a love that partook of adoration in the dear past days at Dundargue, so I love you still!'

'My poor, dear Evan!' cooed the girl.

'Yes—poor indeed—without you.'

So true it was that 'the thing we look forward to,' as George Eliot says, 'often comes to pass; but never precisely as we have imagined it to ourselves.'

Could Eveline ever have looked forward to this when at Hurdell Hall—to see Evan Cameron in life again, and feel his tender kisses on her lips and eyes?

Evan had loved Eveline as a maiden; he had trained himself to suffer, endure, and think of her as a wife; but now he thanked God that he had not to think of her as a mother—the mother of a wretched little Puddicombe!

Lady Aberfeldie, who had fresh views concerning her daughter, was somewhat irate when—on her return from the city of the Caliphs and Khedives—the latter, with perfect deliberation, informed her that Evan Cameron had been at the villa to see Allan, and had paid *her* a long visit.

'He spoke of his old fancy for you, no doubt?' said Lady Aberfeldie, rather freezingly.

'He did, mamma,' was the candid reply.

'He had not the hardihood to ask you to marry him?'

'Mamma!'

'Already—I mean.'

'Of course not.'

'But I suppose he will presume to do so in time?'

'I have no doubt of it, dearest mamma,' replied Eveline, attempting to kiss her; but my Lady Aberfeldie was in no fit of effusion, and coldly tendered her cheek. 'Was not his escape miraculous, mamma?'

'I admit that it was; and now——'

'Just learn this, dearest mamma; I married a short time ago to please you, and, now that God in His goodness has spared and restored Evan to me, I shall marry next to please myself.'

'It is very strange how some girls get it into their head that there is a special

virtue in a man because he is poor.'

'Evan isn't poor now,' replied Eveline, stoutly. 'Stratherroch is nearly free, and, if it were not, I have enough for two.'

'Your jointure dies with you,' said Lady Aberfeldie, sourly.

'Dear Evan will never think of that, mamma; and long before *that* day comes every acre, every tuft of heather in Stratherroch will be disencumbered and free.'

'You have schemed out the whole programme. But as your father's daughter, and the widow of Sir Paget Puddicombe, Baronet, you are entitled to look higher.'

'I don't want to do so, mamma,' said Eveline, coyly and laughingly; 'you see, it is only a case of "heaping up riches, and ye know not who shall gather them."'

Eveline was in a kind of triumphant and defiant mood, such as her mother had never seen her in before, for she added,

'The whirligig of time brings curious things to pass, so Lady Puddicombe will be Mrs. Cameron of Stratherroch after all.'

So the days stole on pleasantly by the Lake of Timsah. Allan grew well rapidly, and, now that she was free and under better auspices, Evan Cameron daily discovered in Eveline some new trait of character that rendered her more worthy of his love and esteem—or indicative that those qualities of passion and tenderness that first excited his interest in her had ripened under all she had undergone—the sorrow and separation that had tried and purified their mutual love, as gold is tried by fire.

We have said that the reconciliation of Allan and Olive came about, and rapidly, too.

'Only love me, Allan,' whispered the girl, as she nestled her sweet face in his neck;

'only love me as you did in the old days at Dundargue, and I shall be so happy. Without your love I could not live.'

'By your strange actions you destroyed my faith in you, darling—and yet I loved you still. Oh, think over it all, and consider if you did not try me sorely, for there was a powerful appearance of deception that was unworthy of us both.'

Her beautiful eyes were moist with tears; her hands stole into his, and he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately, while a torrent of thankfulness and joy overwhelmed her heart.

'And so that wretched photo was the key to your apparently inexplicable conduct?'

'Yes,' replied Olive, weeping, while Allan kissed away her tears.

'Why did you not confide freely in me?'

'I was too terrified—too mortified to

do so, and you were so proud, so suspicious of me. I writhed in secret under the imputation that that man had it in his power to cast upon me with the tampered miniature. I was weak, foolish, Allan, and every act of mine seemed to be a mistake and misplaced; but now——'

'All is over, and all forgotten.'

'Thank heaven for its goodness, Allan. You never wrote to me after that parting at Southsea. Save in your letter to your mother after Tel-el-Kebir, you never once referred to me, and then only in terms of scorn and invective. Oh, Allan, Allan, all that was very hard to bear.'

But Allan found ample means of consoling her now.

'How happy I am,' said Lady Aberfeldie, as she nestled both their heads together on her motherly breast; 'ever since you two were little children, how I prayed for

this; I reared and taught you to this end, and God has seen fit in His goodness to accomplish it.'

And now, having brought our 'heroes and heroines,' to use the old novelist's phraseology, to this point, need we follow them into the region of wedding-bells, wedding-cakes, favours, rice, and old slippers?

We think not.

THE END.

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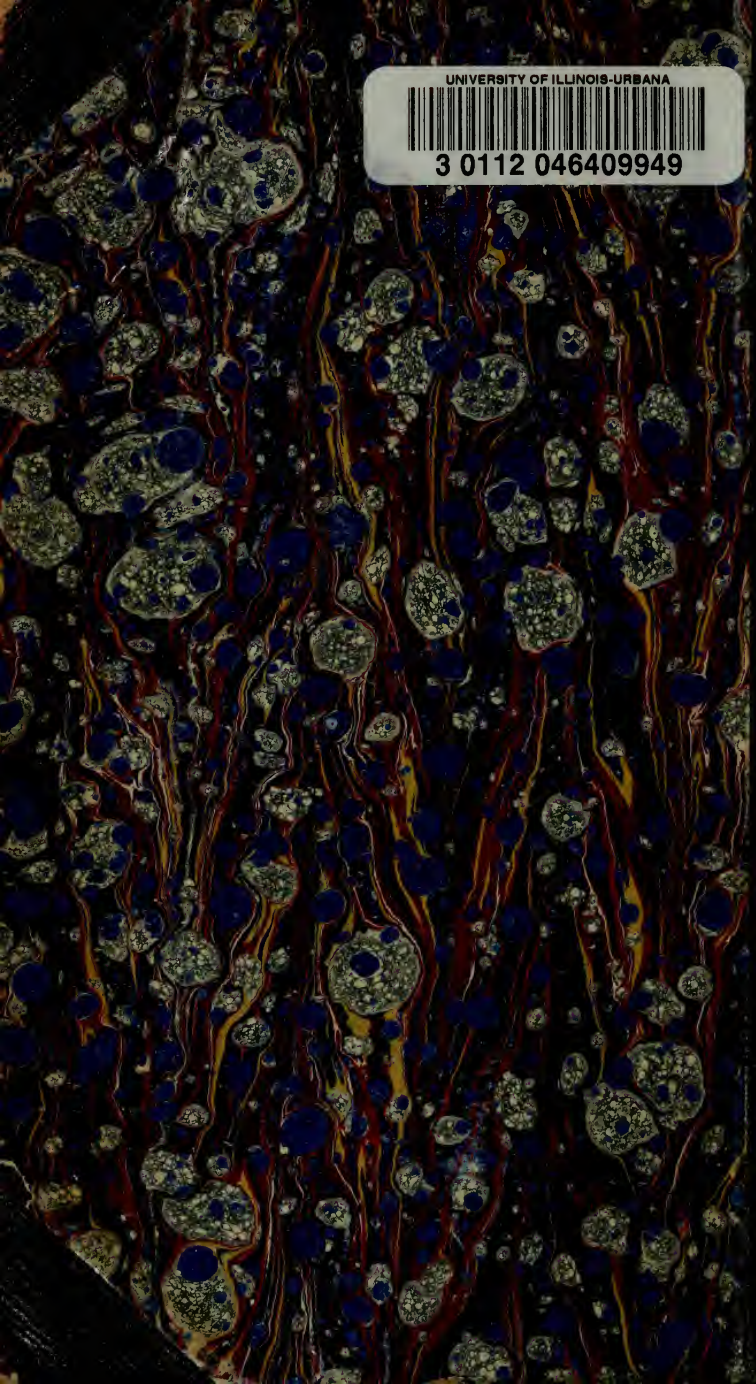
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